



Situation Room

**** SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE ****

Period under review: from **22 April 2021** to **28 April 2021**.

[This report is based on publicly available sources to describe a changing situation. Information subject to change.]

Situation analysis recap:

- Japanese defence minister Nobuo Kishi said Japan will hold a joint military drill with US and French troops in the country's southwest next month. The Japanese government emphasized concerns over China's military expansion and growing activities in the East and South China seas in an annual foreign policy report released on Tuesday, 27 April. The Chinese government accused Japan of hyping up the so-called China threat, maliciously attacking China, and unreasonably interfering in China's internal affairs.
- The Philippines has sent two new diplomatic protests to China over its failure to withdraw vessels that were massing in the contested areas of the South China Sea. The Philippine foreign ministry said maritime officials had observed the continued unauthorised presence and activities of 160 Chinese fishing and militia vessels around the Spratly islands and Scarborough shoal. Five Chinese coastguard vessels were also spotted around the areas. The news came as the Philippines announced a boosting of its presence of vessels in its exclusive economic zone. Chinese diplomats have denied that militia were aboard the vessels. The Philippines defence ministry said on Wednesday, 28 April, that China has no business telling the Philippines what it can or cannot do within its waters, thus rejecting Beijing's opposition to Philippines ongoing coastguard exercises.
- China has commissioned its first Type 075 amphibious assault ship (named *Hainan*), which is expected to be deployed in the South China Sea. The ship may also be deployed in missions around Taiwan. The Chinese navy has commissioned a new destroyer and a nuclear submarine into its South China Sea fleet.
- The Taiwanese National Security Bureau warned that as the Chinese Communist Party moves toward its 100th anniversary later this year, it is likely to drive up pressure against Taiwan and other countries in the region. The information was part of a security report presented by Taiwan's intelligence agency to the Taiwanese legislature.
- The European Union called out China for endangering peace in the South China Sea and urged all parties to abide by the 2016 tribunal ruling. The EU released a new policy aimed at stepping up its influence in the Indo-Pacific region to counter China's rising power.
- German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that she is worried that a provocation in the Taiwan Strait or the South China Sea could turn into a regional military conflict.
- Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe and Vietnamese Defence Minister Phan Van Giang discussed tensions in the South China Sea during a Chinese three-day (from April 24 to 27) visit to Hanoi. Giang reiterated Vietnam's stance on tensions in the South China sea, namely that it looks to resolve disputes in accordance with international law, primarily via the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- The UK has announced it will send a fleet to sail through turbulent waters in Asia. Britain's largest fleet in recent years, named *Plodila*, will embark on a month-long voyage across the Pacific in May. The group will be led by British aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth*, accompanied by two destroyers, two anti-submarine warships, a submarine, and two auxiliary supply ships. It will travel with a US Navy guided-missile destroyer as well as a frigate from the Netherlands, which will be tasked with air defence.

Would you like to know more? Are you interested in international security? Join us.

Find more about Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia at www.euroatlantic.org or contact us at info@euroatlantic.org.



EVRO-ATLANTSKI SVET SLOVENIJE EURO-ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF SLOVENIA

- From 16 to 19 April, the French Navy amphibious assault ship *Tonnerre* and the frigate *Surcouf* sailed through the South China Sea with the Royal Australian Navy's frigate *HMAS Anzac* and supply ship *HMAS Sirius* as part of operation "Jeanne D'Arc".

Sources/Further Reading:

Chen, K. (25. April 2021). German chancellor fears conflict in Taiwan Strait. Taiwan News. Available at <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4186529>

China commissions 3 new warships to boost South China Sea fleet. (25. April 2021). La Prensa Latina Media. Available at <https://www.laprensalatina.com/china-commissions-3-new-warships-to-boost-south-china-sea-fleet/>

EU Blames China for Endangering Peace in South China Sea. (25. April 2021). U.S.News. Available at <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-04-25/eu-blames-china-for-endangering-peace-in-south-china-sea>

Japan emphasizes concerns over China's military in diplomacy report. (27. April 2021). Kyodo News. Available at <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/04/7e7107edf2dc-japan-emphasizes-concerns-over-chinas-military-in-diplomacy-report.html>

Japan plans first joint military drill with US, France as Manila issues more protests against Beijing in South China Sea. (23. April 2021). South China Morning Pos. Available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3130828/japan-plans-first-joint-military-drill-us-france-manila-issues>

Ng. T. (24. April 2021). China's most advanced amphibious assault ship expected to be deployed in disputed South China Sea. South China Morning Post. Available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3130951/chinas-most-advanced-amphibious-assault-ship-expected-be>

Obrien, M. (27. April 2021). UK to send navy to tidal waters of South China Sea. Mediarun Search. Available at <https://www.mediarunsearch.co.uk/uk-to-send-navy-to-tidal-waters-of-south-china-sea/>

Philippines protests China's 'threatening' South China Sea presence. (23. April 2021). Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-protests-chinas-threatening-south-china-sea-presence-2021-04-23/>

Philippines tells China to mind its own business over maritime drills. (28. April 2021). Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/philippines-tells-china-mind-its-own-business-over-maritime-drills-2021-04-28/>

Strong, M. (24. April 2021). China will use CCP's 100th anniversary to pressure Taiwan. Taiwan News. Available at <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4185966>

Vavasseur, X. (22. April 2021). French Navy And Royal Australian Navy Ships Patrol The South China Sea Together. Naval News. Available at https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2021/04/french-navy-and-royal-australian-navy-ships-patrol-the-south-china-sea-together/?fbclid=IwAR2TTUSD6div7O3NqAKxxNVcERCixuS_MwaYPVsf7FUPorIMmXbsVO3Pk-U

Vietnam, China defence ministers meet amid South China Sea tensions. (26. April 2021). TheStar. Available at <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/04/26/vietnam-china-defence-ministers-meet-amid-south-china-sea-tensions>

Analysis by: **Matjaž J. Leben**

Would you like to know more? Are you interested in international security? Join us.

Find more about Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia at www.euroatlantic.org or contact us at info@euroatlantic.org.