



Situation Room

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

Period under review: from 13 May 2021 to 19 May 2021.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- Beijing and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are planning a meeting of foreign ministers around 7 or 8 June, possibly in China. Both parties are expected to revive talks toward a Code of Conduct to avoid conflict in the South China Sea.
- On 12 May, the United States and South Korea held a government dialogue where they discussed ASEAN and events in Southeast Asia. Both countries agreed to expand cooperation in Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific.
- Taiwan is building a wastewater treatment plant on the disputed South China Sea island of Dongsha. It is scheduled to be completed next month.
- The Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte rebuffed a call from China to withdraw vessels from a contested maritime area near a Chinese military installation.
- The Philippines is planning to turn an island in the Spratly archipelago into a new logistics and resupply base in order to support its military presence and law enforcement operations in the disputed area. The Philippine President also warned that Manila's friendly relationship with Beijing could end as a result of this dispute.
- Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh affirmed their opposition to China's growing maritime assertiveness during phone talks on Monday. On Wednesday, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and the Japanese Prime Minister talked on the phone, discussing issues such as the South China Sea, sea piracy and terrorism.
- The US Navy sent a guided-missile destroyer *USS Curtis Wilbur* through the Taiwan Strait on Tuesday, 18 May.
- The new US Marines graduated last week from the new Infantry Marine Course, whose final exercise simulated a 300-yard (274.32 meters) swim in full battle gear through the South China Sea. Amid tensions in the disputed region and over Taiwan, China issued a warning that the US would be defeated if the two powers go to war.
- The U.S. Army revealed the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) that is designed to fly at 17 times the speed of sound. The missile is capable of destroying enemy targets from faraway, standoff ranges. The weapon was designed with a view of possible conflicts with Russia and China, both of which already possess similar, albeit shorter range, systems. The LRHW is set to have its first test flight in 2023, and it is primarily do be deployed in Southeast Asia.

Sources/Further Reading:

Chan, M. (19. May 2021). *China hits out at US Navy 'provocation' after warship transits Taiwan Strait*. *South China Morning Post*. Available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3134062/china-hits-out-us-navy-provocation-after-warship-transits>

China warns US it will be defeated if the two superpowers go to war: Report. (15. May 2021). ANI. Available at <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/china-warns-us-it-will-be-defeated-if-the-two-superpowers-go-to-war-report20210515194443/>

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

Galvez, D. (19. May 2021). Duterte, Suga talk about South China Sea issues over phone call. Inquirer. Available at <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/196361/duterte-japan-pm-suga-discuss-maritime-issues-concerns-over-south-china-sea-over-phone-call>

Hepher T. and Lampert, A. (13. May 2021). Luxury jet makers battle over lucrative spy plane niche. Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/luxury-jet-makers-battle-over-lucrative-spy-plane-niche-2021-05-13/>

Japan, Vietnam leaders oppose China's maritime actions in phone talks. (17. May 2021). ABS CBN News. Available at <https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/05/17/21/japan-vietnam-leaders-oppose-chinas-maritime-actions-in-phone-talks>

Jha, P. (17. May 2021). Vietnam's strategic interests in East Vietnam Seas/South China Sea. Modern Diplomacy. Available at <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2021/05/17/vietnams-strategic-interests-in-east-vietnam-seas-south-china-sea/>

Jibiki, K. (14. May 2021). China looks to one-up US with face-to-face ASEAN talks. NikkeiAsia. Available at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/China-looks-to-one-up-US-with-face-to-face-ASEAN-talks>

Kenney, C. M. (13. May 2021). The Naval Brief: Cruiser warning, Swimming Marines, Shipyard delays, and more.... Defense One. Available at <https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2021/05/the-naval-brief-may-13-2021/174013/>

Mizokami, K. (17. May 2021). The Army Reveals the Range of Its New Hypersonic Weapon: 1,725 Miles. Popular Mechanics. Available at <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/weapons/a36421213/army-hypersonic-weapon-1700-mile-range/>

Morales, N. (18. May 2021). Philippines' Duterte issues gag order over South China Sea. Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-duterte-issues-gag-order-cabinet-over-south-china-sea-spat-2021-05-17/>

Sadler, B. D. (16. May 2021). Toward a New Naval Statecraft. Defense One. Available at <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2021/05/toward-new-naval-statecraft/174063/>

SCMP: Philippines won't move an inch on South China Sea, Duterte tells Beijing. (15. May 2021). The Loadstar. Available at <https://theloadstar.com/scmp-philippines-wont-move-an-inch-on-south-china-sea-duterte-tells-beijing/>

Strong, M. (14. May 2021). Taiwan builds wastewater treatment plant on disputed South China Sea island. Taiwan News. Available at <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4203343>

To Counter China, Philippines Plans Bigger Base in Spratly Islands. (13. May 2021). The Maritime Executive. Available at <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/to-counter-china-philippines-plans-bigger-base-in-spratly-islands>

U.S.-ROK Pledge to Increase Cooperation on ASEAN and Southeast Asia. (14. May 2021). Mirage. Available at <https://www.miragenews.com/us-rok-pledge-to-increase-cooperation-on-asean-560030/>

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.