



Situation Room

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

Period under review: from 20 May 2021 to 26 May 2021.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- China issued its second protest on Thursday, 20 May, over United States naval activity in the region, drawing an unusually sharp response from the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet, which accused Beijing of attempting to assert illegitimate maritime rights at the expense of its neighbouring states.
- China warned the United States and South Korea against playing with fire on Monday, 24 May, after Taiwan was mentioned in a joint statement by the two allies.
- Chinese maritime militia unit released a video celebrating its military role. The video was produced by the Political Department of the PLA Hainan Province Sansha Garrison. Many of the members of this militia unit are inhabitants of small-scale fishing enterprises on the Paracel islands, further complicating their civilian fishermen status.
- According to the Chinese-run state media, the Chinese air force put an upgraded version of one of its most advanced air-defence missile systems to an extreme test in unfamiliar terrain. Observers said the exercise involving the upgraded HQ-9 system was meant to show the hardware at full stretch, as the military presses on with plans to develop a modern combat-ready force.
- The Philippines appealed for a peaceful resolution of sea disputes during the 27th Association of Southeast Asian Nations-China Senior Officials' Consultation on 18 May.
- The Philippines' foreign ministry said on Saturday, 22 May that the Philippines and China held friendly and candid talks on the South China Sea.
- Japan offered Indonesia to jointly build warships. If the project materializes, it would strengthen Indonesia's ability to deter Chinese intimidation in the South China Sea, and reinforce Japan's cooperation with ASEAN.

Sources/Further Reading:

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Mai, J. (24. May 2021). *Don't 'play with fire', China tells US and South Korea over Taiwan concerns.* South China Morning Post. Available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3134670/dont-play-fire-china-tells-us-and-south-korea-over-taiwan>

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Philippines and China hold 'friendly and candid' talks on South China Sea. (22. May 2021). Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-china-hold-friendly-candid-talks-south-china-sea-2021-05-22/>

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