



Situation Room

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

Period under review: from 27 May 2021 to 2 June 2021.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- Malaysia accused China of breaching national airspace after 16 Chinese military aircraft flew over disputed waters off the Malaysian eastern federal state of Sarawak. China responded that the reported activities were only a part of routine flight training.
- The Philippines issued diplomatic protest over China's continuing illegal presence and activities near a Thitu island, located in the South China Sea.
- Chinese and Vietnamese navy chiefs agreed to set up a communication hotline as part of efforts to manage the risk of conflict over their competing claims in the disputed sea.
- Beijing accused the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand of making “irresponsible” comments, after the pair condemned destabilising activities in the South China Sea and raised concerns about human rights in Xinjiang.
- The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies reported that the Philippines has drastically increased its sea patrols in the South China Sea recently.
- In response to repeated Chinese incursions into Indonesian waters, Indonesia aims to expand its submarine fleet up to three times its current fleet of 12 vessels. The country is also seeking to expand its fleet of corvettes.
- The Philippine administration is looking into building and fortifying logistics facilities on Thitu Island, which is part of Vietnam's territorial claim in the South China Sea. Vietnam reiterated on Thursday, 27 May that any foreign construction within the Spratly Islands is illegal.
- China is planning to increase its nuclear capabilities, especially its sea-based nuclear deterrent of intercontinental submarine-launched ballistic missiles in order to deter potential military action by the United States.
- China's newest 100,000-ton deep-sea semi-submersible oil platform is set to begin production in the oil fields within the South China sea in June.

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