



Situation Room

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

Period under review: from 10 June 2021 to 16 June 2021.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- During the NATO Summit 2021, held in Brussels on Monday, 14 June, allied states leaders declared China a security challenge. The Chinese denounced NATO's statement and declared China as a force for peace that would defend itself if threatened.
- China sent 28 military planes into Taiwan's air defence identification zone on Tuesday, 15 June, a day after a US aircraft carrier group held military drills in the disputed South China Sea.
- U.S. Army general Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned the United States Senate in his testimony that China is increasing its military capability at a very serious and sustained rate.
- The Pentagon issued a new directive, focusing the efforts of the U.S. Department of Defence towards China, mainly because of Chinese deployment of additional surveillance assets to one of its artificial island military bases in the South China Sea.
- Satellite imagery from Wednesday, 9 June, showed a Chinese intelligence-gathering ship in the lagoon at Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly Islands. On the airfield were a Chinese maritime patrol aircraft and an airborne early warning and control plane.
- A news release by the Royal Malaysian Air Force stated that 16 aircraft from the People's Liberation Army Air Force approached Malaysia's coast in the previous week in a tactical formation. The unannounced appearance was detected by air defence radars at 11:52 am MYT (Malaysia Time Zone) (3:52 am UTC) on Monday, 7 June. The vessels did not respond to contact attempts by Malaysian air traffic controllers.
- A missile brigade under the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force recently held a launch practice in an unspecified training field at night to improve its combat ability. During the exercise, the brigade practised the fast transfer of missiles to another location to launch a second wave of missiles, a drill to train the brigade's fast-response capabilities. China's rocket force conducted firing exercises involving DF-26 ballistic missiles that are claimed to be capable of destroying aircraft carriers.
- Naval congestion at container shipping ports in southern China is worsening as authorities stepped up disinfection measures amid a flare-up in COVID-19 cases, causing the biggest backlog since 2019.
- China will deploy a new stealth fighter on its upcoming aircraft carrier. A model of the stealth FC-31 Gyrfalcon, which China claims to be similar to the US F-35, was spotted positioned on a mock-up of an aircraft carrier at a Chinese test site in Wuhan. It is likely to be deployed alongside China's increasing military presence in the heavily contested South China Sea.
- Leaders of the G7 called for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and urged China to respect human rights in the Xinjiang region and freedom in Hong Kong. China responded with a statement that no country has any rights to criticize China or interfere in China's internal affairs.

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