



## Situation Room

### **\*\* SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE \*\***

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

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

#### **Situation analysis recap:**

- China lodged new diplomatic complaints against the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman accusing her of building a negative trend against China ahead of the senior official's visit to calm tensions with Beijing.
- The UK aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth* and her Carrier Strike Group have entered the South China Sea on Monday, 26 July.
- China announced on Monday that the People's Liberation Army Navy would conduct an exercise in the South China Sea, near Shangchuan Island (Guangdong province) between 27 July until 29 July. The announcement came as U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman met with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng on Monday. At the meeting, Xie told Sherman that bilateral relations are now in a stalemate and face serious difficulties.
- The Chinese military conducted military drills featuring assault landing and island-control exercises on Tuesday, 27 July, continuing its training to boost combat readiness in case of conflict in the Taiwan Strait. In addition, the People's Liberation Army staged drills in the South China Sea as British aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth* sailed through the disputed waters.
- On Thursday 22 July, the Philippine's presidential palace dismissed reports that China was conducting oil exploration in Philippine-claimed areas in the South China Sea. Filipino fishermen in northern Philippines supposedly found an oil exploration device at sea within the country's exclusive economic zone. The equipment bore Chinese characters. The ocean bottom seismometer found by local fishermen is widely used for oil exploration and detecting earthquakes. The device could have been washed away from the resource-rich Scarborough Shoal.
- China criticized the US television network NBC Universal for not showing Taiwan and the South China Sea on a map of China that the network displayed during the opening ceremony of the Olympics.
- French President Emmanuel Macron has pledged to bolster France's security ties with Japan.
- U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated America's commitment to the Indo-Pacific and chided China during his speech, held in Singapore on Tuesday. Austin criticized China for its action in the region but said the U.S is not seeking confrontation with China and that he is committed to pursuing a constructive, stable relationship with Beijing.
- On Wednesday, 28 July, the U.S. Secretary of Defence started a two-day visit to Vietnam. Austin is seeking to bolster ties with Vietnam, one of the Southeast Asian nations embroiled in a territorial rift with China.

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