



## Situation Room

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

**Period under review:** from **22 February 2022** to **7 March 2022**.

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

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

- The U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) and the Japanese Self-Defence Force (JSDF) conducted joint exercises in the South China Sea to test the USMC's *Force Design 2030*, which revamps and retools the Marine Corps with a focus on countering Chinese forces.
- Taiwan's air force activated again on 24 February to warn away nine Chinese military aircrafts that entered Taiwanese air defence zone. The defence ministry said that the latest mission involved eight Chinese fighters and one reconnaissance aircraft, which flew over an area to the northeast of the Pratas Islands.
- A U.S. guided-missile destroyer *USS Ralph Johnson* sailed through the Taiwan Strait on 26 February. The U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet said that the destroyer was conducting a routine transit through international waters. Taiwan's Defence Ministry said the ship sailed in a northerly direction through the Strait, that its forces had monitored its passage and observed nothing out of the ordinary. China criticised the US's action.
- China launched a military exercise on Hainan Island, a day after the U.S. 7th Fleet announced that one of its destroyers transited through the Taiwan Strait. The Hainan Maritime Safety Administration issued a navigation warning saying military training would take place from Sunday to Tuesday close to the sea and that entering the area within a six-mile radius is prohibited.
- China launched the second satellite rideshare mission (Chang Zheng 8) to the Sun-Synchronous Orbit on 27 February. The current plan is to increase the size of the constellation to 138 satellites by the year 2030. This would provide imagery intelligence every 10 minutes with resolutions down to 0,72 meters of an area up to 11,6 kilometres per satellite.
- A Chinese military spokesperson said on 24 February that the United States has become a troublemaker and accident-maker in the South China Sea, rather than a defender of free navigation and overflight in contrast to what the US has claimed.
- The report *Chinese Surveys in the South China Sea* finds that the surveys have become a standard response by China to Southeast Asian offshore oil and gas activity in the South China Sea. A map provided by AMTI shows very busy patterns of Chinese survey activities in the Sea during 2020 and 2021.
- The EU offered an access to a web-based platform that enables countries' navies and coastguards to communicate in real-time. Trials of the *Indo-Pacific Regional Information Sharing* platform are currently under way in the Philippines. This platform would contribute in maintaining peace and stability in the region by allowing the countries using it to act as each other's eyes and ears, which is especially important when deploying supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles.
- China's first amphibious assault ship called *Hainan* has reached initial operating capability.
- The US Navy has retrieved its fighter jet (F-35) from the depths of the South China Sea where it sank after an accident in January on the aircraft carrier *USS Carl Vinson*.

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- On 5 March, China announced that it is going to carry out military drills in the South China Sea in an area between its southern province of Hainan and Vietnam. The exercise is going to last more than a week. The government issued a warning to all ships to stay away.
- China released a statement on 7 March that all parties negotiating the South China Sea *Code of Conduct* need to prevent external interference in the region. Beijing and the 10 ASEAN member states have been negotiating such a code for nearly two decades with an initial target to complete talks by the end of this year.
- China has announced a 7.1% increase in its military spending for 2022 with its combined defence spending thus reaching \$230 billion or around 5.5% of the Chinese GDP.

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