



Situation Room

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

Period under review: from 26 April 2022 to 16 May 2022.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- Recent satellite imagery shows that China is continuing to actively develop its facilities on the disputed Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands. Furthermore, two months ago, a top US commander has said that Beijing had fully militarised Subi Reef.
- Indonesia may turn its Natuna Islands in the disputed sea into a special economic zone (SEZ) to reinforce maritime security and entice investment in the local fishing and tourism industries. The move may provoke protests from China but is aimed at preventing Beijing from increasing its activity near the islands. Currently Indonesia has 18 SEZs, six of which are still being constituted.
- Vietnam's government has rejected China's imposition of its seasonal fishing ban in the South China Sea. The ban, which is imposed unilaterally each year by Beijing, runs from May to August and applies to all of the waters north of 12 degrees latitude. Vietnam condemned the fishing ban, calling it a violation of Vietnam's sovereignty and territorial jurisdiction under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- The Philippines has pulled the Hollywood action movie *Uncharted* from cinemas over a scene depicting a disputed South China Sea map.
- Concern over Solomon Islands' security pact with China is mounting in the US Congress, with politicians on both sides expressing alarm over the deal. Senior administration officials have warned that the United States would respond accordingly to any signs of China establishing a permanent military presence in Solomon Islands.
- The Chinese Navy said on 3 May that the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier group had begun a realistic combat training exercise in the Western Pacific. Five destroyers, one frigate and one supply ship are escorting the carrier.
- The Japanese and Taiwanese militaries have been put on alert after a Chinese Navy flotilla led by the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier was spotted sailing from the East China Sea towards the Pacific Ocean.
- China has urged ASEAN to take the lead in regional development and accused the US of trying to provoke an arms race in the Asia-Pacific.
- Ferdinand Marcos Junior, the son of the Philippines' controversial leader Ferdinand Marcos, achieved a landslide victory in the country's presidential election on 9 May.
- The United States has offered more than 150 million dollars to ASEAN countries for initiatives including maritime cooperation and clean energy. The announcement was made on 12 May at the US-ASEAN summit in Washington, where US President Joe Biden hosted his counterparts from the 10-member bloc.
- China's military has said that it had monitored and warned a US guided-missile cruiser *USS Port Royal* that had sailed through the Taiwan Strait. Incident occurred shortly after China carried out military drills near an island in the strait. US Navy has stated that the transit was conducted in accordance with international maritime law.

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