



Situation Room

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

Period under review: from **24 March 2024** to **24 April 2024**.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- **(24 March)** China's Ministry of Defence warned the Philippines authorities to stop possible escalation between two countries after Philippines military reported that Chinese Coast Guard and government-linked maritime militia vessels blocked and harassed Philippines civilian boat *Unaizah May 4* (UM4), which was hired to resupply the military base at the Second Thomas Shoal, and used water cannons, which injured several sailors.
- **(25 March)** China stated that it may propose further diplomatic talks on maritime issues, stabilising trade relations, and regional security with Australia after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong amid tensions in the South China Sea.
- **(28 March)** Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr warned China that the Philippines will respond to the recent Chinese Coast Guard and Maritime Militia vessels' provocations in the South China Sea, while not seeking a further escalation of the conflict. He later issued orders to his government's officials to improve Philippines' maritime security to confront territorial and security challenges.
- **(2 April)** Australia, Japan, Philippines, and the US announced that they will conduct joint military drills close to the Palawan Island in the South China Sea. The purpose of the joint exercise is to improve interoperability between all states and will include anti-submarine warfare training, communication drills and sailing of military vessels in specific formations.
- **(7 April)** Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theatre Command stated that they will conduct joint air and naval combat patrols in the South China Sea on the same day as US, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines are set to conduct their own joint military drills.
- **(11 April)** Leaders of Japan, the Philippines and the US met for the first trilateral summit meeting in Washington, where they discussed the security situation in East Asia and the South China Sea. The three leaders also discussed future economic cooperation.
- **(13 April)** Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr told the media that the trilateral cooperation agreement between the US, Japan and the Philippines is crucial for security and stability of the South China Sea amid China's recent actions in the region.

Would you like to know more? Are you interested in international security? Join us.

Find more about Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia at www.euroatlantic.org or contact us at info@euroatlantic.org.



- **(16 April)** Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr stated that his government has no further plans to give the US access to more military bases and that the nine already active military sites with the additional US personnel and weapons were created as a response to Chinese actions in the South China Sea.
- **(18 April)** China's Foreign Ministry warned that the upcoming annual joint US-Philippines military exercises Balikatan 2024 will further deteriorate the tense situation in the South China Sea. The exercise, which is being held for the 39th time, is set to be the largest to date, involving 16.700 soldiers and will simulate retaking enemy-occupied islands in areas next to Taiwan and in the South China Sea.
- **(20 April)** US House of Representatives approved a \$95 billion military aid package that includes about \$8 billion for helping US allies in the Indo-Pacific region and countering China's influence. \$3,3 billion will be spent on submarine infrastructure and development, while \$1,9 billion will be allocated for replenishment of US weapons stockpiles that were sent to Taiwan and other allies in the South China Sea region.
- **(21 April)** Two SH-60 patrol helicopter belonging to the Japanese Naval Self-Defence Force (JSDF) crashed into the Pacific during night-time anti-submarine training exercise off the Japanese southern coast near Izu Island group, resulting in one dead and seven missing crew members.
- **(22 April)** Vice chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission, Zhang Youxia stated that the sea should not be an arena where states compete with military vessels. This statement was made after another Chinese official reported that The People's Republic of China is committed to resolving maritime disputes through diplomatic means.
- **(23 April)** India began supplying BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines through the deal worth \$375 million. Both countries are prepared to deepen their defence and strategic relations amid increased Chinese activities in the South China Sea.
- **(24 April)** US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken arrived in China to warn Chinese officials that the US and its European allies will no longer tolerate Chinese sale of dual-use technology and weapon components to the Russian Federation. The US believes these sales have contributed significantly to the rebuilding and modernisation of the Russian military-industrial base.

Review by: **Gregor Črnugelj**

*Would you like to know more? Are you interested in international security? Join us.
Find more about Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia at www.euroatlantic.org or contact us at info@euroatlantic.org.*



EVRO-ATLANTSKI SVET SLOVENIJE EURO-ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF SLOVENIA

Sources/Further Reading:

- Al Jazeera (21 April 2024). One dead, seven missing after two Japan navy helicopters crash in Pacific. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/21/crew-missing-after-two-japanese-helicopters-crash-during-pacific-exercise>
- Al Jazeera. (28 March 2024). Philippines's Marcos promises action after China's 'dangerous attacks.' Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/28/philippines-marcos-promises-measures-after-chinas-dangerous-attacks>
- Borger, J. (24 April 2024). Antony Blinken arrives in China with warning for Beijing over support of Russia. The Guardian. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/24/antony-blinken-china-visit-us-secretary-of-state-beijing>
- Chen, L. (22 April 2024). China is committed to resolving maritime disputes through talks, official says. Reuters. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-is-committed-resolving-maritime-disputes-through-talks-official-says-2024-04-22/>
- Davidson, H. (18 April 2024). China sounds warning after Philippines and US announce most expansive military drills yet. The Guardian. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/18/china-warning-balikatan-exercise-2024-philippines-us-military-drills>
- Favila, A. (16 April 2024). The Philippine president says he won't give US access to more local military bases. AP News. Available at <https://apnews.com/article/philippines-us-military-china-marcos-a89fc14bdef820b83d4a18adb557b487>
- Johnson, J. (24 March 2024). After clash, China warns Philippines over escalation in South China Sea. The Japan Times. Available at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2024/03/24/asia-pacific/politics/china-philippines-south-china-sea-escalation/>
- Kyodo News. (2 April 2024). Japan, U.S., Australia, Philippines to hold drill in South China Sea. Available at <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2024/04/2ec17913513e-japan-us-australia-philippines-to-hold-drill-in-south-china-sea.html>
- Lee, C. (3 April 2024). Japan seeks to defend national interests in South China Sea. Voice of America. Available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/japan-seeks-to-defend-national-interests-in-south-china-sea/7555702.html>
- News Wires. (7 April 2024). China says it conducted military drills in South China Sea on same day as US and allies. France 24. Available at <https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20240407-china-says-it-conducted-military-drills-in-south-china-sea-on-same-day-as-us-and-allies>
- Pasricha, A. (23 April 2024). Amid China tensions, India delivers supersonic cruise missiles to Philippines. Voice of America. Available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/amid-china-tensions-india-delivers-supersonic-cruise-missiles-to-philippines-/7581242.html>
- Reuters. (13 April 2024). Ties with US and Japan will 'change dynamic' in South China Sea, Philippines president says. The Guardian. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/13/dynamic-in-south-china-sea-is-changing-through-growing-us-and-japan-ties-says-philippines-president>
- Reuters. (31 March 2024). Philippines boosts maritime security as China tension rises. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-marcos-boosts-maritime-security-china-tension-rises-2024-03-31/>
- The Associated Press. (20 April 2024). A look at what's in the \$95 billion foreign aid package passed by the House. AP News. Available at <https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-aid-israel-gaza-taiwan-c0645ad3f47f9d919c8988a98593e887>
- Yang, W. (25 March 2024). China Proposes Dialogue With Australia Amid Rising Tension in South China Sea. Voice of America. Available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-proposes-dialogue-with-australia-amid-rising-tension-in-south-china-sea-/7541491.html>

Would you like to know more? Are you interested in international security? Join us.

Find more about Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia at www.euroatlantic.org or contact us at info@euroatlantic.org.