



Situation Room

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

Period under review: from **10 November 2024** to **10 December 2024**.

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

Situation analysis recap:

- **(10 November)** Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted online geographic coordinates for the baselines around the disputed Scarborough Shoal that define the distance of Chinese territorial waters and exclusive economic zone.
- **(11 November)** Indonesia stated that it does not recognise Chinese territorial claims over the South China Sea and that Chinese claims do not have any international legal basis, despite the fact that both countries recently signed a new maritime cooperation agreement.
- **(12 November)** Philippines Secretary of National Defence Gilberto Teodoro stated that China is increasing its pressure on his country to abandon its sovereign rights in the disputed South China Sea during the meeting with his Australian counterpart in Canberra.
- **(13 November)** New maritime cooperation agreement between China and Indonesia that was announced during Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing was criticised by multiple security analysts as an Indonesian retreat from increasing Chinese expansion in the South China Sea region.
- **(14 November)** Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto stated that he will protect the sovereignty of his country in the South China Sea and will respect all regional powers after he received criticism on his signing of a maritime cooperation agreement with China.
- **(15 November)** Chinese Coast Guard reported that it allowed the Philippine Coast Guard to conduct a resupply mission that delivered supplies to Filipino forces stationed on the *BRP Sierra Madre*, a ship that was deliberately grounded in 1999 on the Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea. Philippine Coast Guard later stated that the goal of the mission was to rotate its personnel stationed on the grounded ship, which now serves as a permanent outpost, although it did not respond to statements about the Chinese permission to conduct the mission.
- **(16 November)** US President Joe Biden met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Lima, Peru. They discussed multiple bilateral, regional, and global issues and possible areas of cooperation along with differences between the US and the PRC. President Biden affirmed that the US is committed to upholding international law and freedom of navigation around Taiwan and more broadly in the South China Sea.

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- **(17 November)** Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles, Japanese Minister of Defence Nakatani Gen, and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III expressed concerns about destabilising Chinese actions against the Philippines and other states in the South China Sea and affirmed their opposition to any unilateral coercive actions in the region during their fourteenth Trilateral Defence Ministers' Meeting (TDMM) in Darwin, Australia. They also emphasised the importance of expanding their trilateral operational cooperation, planning and building advanced capabilities together, and demonstrating their presence in the South China Sea and the broader Indo-Pacific region.
- **(18 November)** Philippines Secretary of Defense Gilberto Teodoro and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III signed a bilateral military intelligence-sharing agreement named General Security of Military Information Agreement during the ceremony at the Department of National Defense in Manila, Philippines. The deal will allow sharing of classified information and technologies between both states.
- **(19 November)** US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III visited Philippines' Antonio Bautista Air Base located on the Palawan Island and spoke with the officials from Philippines Western Command that is tasked with defending the Philippines' claims in the South China Sea.
- **(21 November)** US Embassy in Manila spokesperson Kanishka Gangopadhyay said that the US military will support the operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the disputed South China Sea through a newly created Task Force-Ayungin, which is meant to improve interoperability between both militaries and will involve coordination in the fields of intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance.
- **(28 November)** Satellite images from Maxar Technologies revealed a build-up of approximately 60 Chinese Maritime Militia civilian vessels near Thitu Island in the South China Sea. The island holds a strategically important Philippine outpost from which its' forces monitor Chinese naval and air activities. Philippines Navy spokesperson Rear Admiral Roy Trinidad later stated that such Chinese manoeuvres are regular and should not be treated as a major threat to Philippine security.
- **(29 November)** Australia deployed two Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircrafts to conduct patrols in the South China Sea during Operation Gateway, Australia's longest-running annual military operation.
- **(30 November)** US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) stated that the US has signed a new weapons deal with Taiwan, worth \$385 million. The deal includes the delivery of military equipment, including spare parts for F-16 fighter jets and radar systems that should improve Taiwanese military operational readiness against current and future threats.
- **(2 December)** Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's visit of US State Department-funded think tank and educational institution East-West Center based at the

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University of Hawaii's Manoa campus. President Lai Ching-te exchanged gifts with the think tank's president and held a speech that was closed to the journalists.

- **(3 December)** Japan's Self-Defense Forces stated that they deployed a combat support ship, and a P-3 survey aircraft for warning and reconnaissance operations after they had spotted a Russian Kilo-class submarine, escorted by another Russian naval ship, about 50 kilometres south of Japan's westernmost Yonaguni Island, just east of Taiwan shores.
- **(5 December)** Philippine Coast Guard and Bureau of Fisheries reported that their vessels were targeted by Chinese Coast Guard and Navy ships using water cannons while they were conducting routine patrol to protect Philippines' fishermen near Scarborough Shoal. Chinese Coast Guard replied to the accusations with a statement that blamed the Philippines for encroaching on Chinese territory.
- **(6 December)** US Indo-Pacific Command stated that the US, Japan, and the Philippines deployed a reconnaissance aircraft and multiple navy vessels on a joint patrol in the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone in the South China Sea to uphold freedom of navigation and other international laws regarding the use of maritime space.
- **(8 December)** Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense reported that China sent 14 military ships, 7 military aircraft, and 4 balloons near Taiwan's shore in preparation of a larger military exercise near the island. These military drills are likely a Chinese response to the recent visit of the Taiwanese President on Hawaii.
- **(9 December)** Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense stated that it launched combat readiness drills and set up an emergency centre as a response to possible Chinese military drills, for which China deployed more than 90 ships near Taiwan's shore, about two-thirds of which are People's Liberation Army – Navy (PLAN) vessels and the rest belong to the Chinese Coast Guard.
- **(10 December)** Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said that Philippine Navy will not deploy its military vessels to the West Philippine Sea since such move would escalate tensions in the region, which the Philippines would like to avoid. He also reiterated that the Philippines would continue to resupply its fishermen and protect its territorial integrity in the disputed South China Sea.

Review by: **Gregor Črnugelj**

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