



South China Sea Dispute: Philippines and Vietnam Allies in Position Papers against China

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-china-sea-dispute-philippines-vietnam-allies-position-papers-against-china-1753722>

Vietnam and the Philippines expressed support for each other this week against claims made by China in the hotly disputed South China Sea area. The battle over a cluster of resource-rich islands and strategic maritime territories in Southeast Asia is now being fought before an arbitration tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands.

Vietnam took its dispute with China to the legal venue when Hanoi filed a formal submission with the arbitration tribunal challenging a position paper that Beijing submitted on December 7th. In its paper, Vietnam's foreign ministry rejected China's legal objections to an arbitration case filed by the Philippines, accusing the country of exploiting Philippine-owned waters and thus undermining the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Manila's first arbitration claim against Beijing has now opened the door for other countries, such as Vietnam, to challenge China.

The messy back-and-forth among the three nations has grown more complicated as the Philippines and Vietnam pile on criticism of China.

The Vietnamese Foreign Ministry representative, Le Hai Binh, said that it is Vietnam's consistent position to fully reject China's claim over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos and adjacent waters as well as China's claiming of 'historic rights' to the waters, sea-bed, and subsoil within the dotted-line that unilaterally stated by China. And for that Vietnam's position, the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs said that it is helpful in terms of promoting the rule of law and in finding peaceful and nonviolent solutions to the South China Sea claims.

Vietnam and the Philippines have been the most vocal in their territorial disputes with China, to the point where confrontations by naval forces in the area led to alarm that peaceful mediation was

in jeopardy.

In the case of the Philippines, Chinese fishermen have frequently been found in waters the Filipinos have long considered to belong to them. And in the case of Vietnam, a Chinese state-owned

oil rig was positioned off its coast in May, encroaching on its EEZ. The oil rig ignited anti-China rioting in Vietnam, leading many Chinese expatriates to flee the country out of fear for their safety. (AFY)

China Rejects US Report on Sea Claims

<http://www.voanews.com/content/china-us-spar-over-south-china-sea-dispute/2554700.html>

China rejected US government report detailing Beijing's maritime territorial claims in the South China Sea, saying the documents violates Washington's pledge to remain neutral in the dispute. Both Beijing and Washington released reports in the past week that weighed-in on the longstanding dispute over who owns the scores of reefs, small islands, and surrounding waters of the resource rich South China Seas.

An US State Department Report examined the historic, geographic, and legal basis for China's vast claims in the strategic region, concluding that they do not accord with the international law of the sea, based on UN treaty that China has signed. Then report then drew a sharp response from China's foreign ministry.

Spokesperson Hong Lei said that China's rights and claims in the sea are formed by history and upheld by Chinese governments so the report has violated US commitment of taking no sides in the South China issue. China's territorial claims in the South China Sea are outlined in maps containing the nine-dash line, a boundary that encloses water, islands, and other features of the resource-rich sea. This includes territory that has been claimed by other nations, including Vietnam and the Philippines, for a long time.

Philippines has appealed for international arbitration in the dispute under UNCLOS and China, until December 15, has defend its position even though Beijing has already signaled that it will not participate in the process. In a government report, Beijing

made the case that the territorial disputes must first be worked out between the nations before any international arbitration can move forward. China has long rejected having the United Nations or other international body to help adjudicate the dispute, preferring to deal with the disagreements with other nations.

The study by the US State Department's Bureau of Oceans and International and Scientific Affairs, said that China, in backing its claim, is using maps that date back to 1947, but the maps 'lack precision' and are too inconsistent to form as the basis for its historical claim to the waterway. The study also said that there is no 'Chinese law, declaration, proclamation, or other official statement describing and putting the international community on notice of a historical claim to the waters within the dashed line'. It said that

China's historical claim fails to meet the legal tests used in international law for addressing these kinds of disputes.

Carl Thayer, a professor at the Australian Defense Force Academy, said while the Chinese paper seeks to influence judges in the arbitration case without direct engagement, the US study presses China forcefully for clarification on its territorial claims.

The US study also said that China's claims are contrary to the provisions on maritime zones of UNCLOS, which were accepted by China as a signatory to the convention. Those provisions favor sovereign rights of a coastal state over historical claims. It concluded that China cannot use the nine-dash line to unilaterally establish maritime boundaries with other countries and that China needs to 'clarify' its claim. (AFY)

Hamas Launches Test Rockets towards the Mediterranean Sea

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4603003,00.html>

Hamas' military wing launched three rockets aimed at the Mediterranean Sea on Saturday, December 11th, Palestinian sources in the Gaza Strip reported, as part

of experiments designed to restore Izz ad-Din al-Qassan Brigades' firepower to what it was before Operation Protective Edge. This marks the third day in a row that

test rockets were launched.

Prior to the test rockets, similar experiments had been conducted on two days before. The sound of the explosion ricocheted through the Gaza Strip and even resulted in a false report within Gaza that the explosions came from shots by Israeli tanks aimed at the Buriej Refugee camp. The rocket testing joins a long list of recent experiments made by Hamas in the past few weeks. It is estimated that since the end of Operation Protective Edge, dozens of rockets have

been launched towards the Mediterranean Sea from within Gaza for experimental purposes.

Hamas official in Cairo confirmed that Hamas has conducted experimental rocket launches and said that they do not constitute a violation of the ceasefire agreement between Gaza and Israel because the agreement did not mention and was not agreed upon that Hamas was prevented from carrying out experiments with rockets. (AFY)

Russian Navy to Focus Strategy on Arctic Zone and Black Sea

<http://www.newsweek.com/russian-navy-will-focus-strategy-until-2030-arctic-zone-and-black-sea-290496>

The Russian navy has unveiled plans to strengthen its presence in the Black Sea and the Arctic zone, heavily focusing its military strategy on the two regions for the next 15 years according to the head of-ficer of the Russian navy, admiral Victor Chirkov. Chirkov next said that the new naval doctrine, which is in place until 2030, will see Russia strengthen its presence around Crimea and the North Pole.

A crucial part of the new strategy, according to Chirkov, will be 'modernising the facilities' on

the North Sea route which is the shipping lane that connect Russia's northernmost waters with the North Pole, Scandinavia and Alaska. Russia's territorial claim over the North Pole has seen Putin at odds with the governments of Canada, Norway, Denmark, and the US, over the rights to access the oil rich region.

A military overhaul of Russia's northernmost perimeter is expected to be part of the new strategy with heavy militarization plans for the Murmansk area,

Franz Josef Land, Wrangel Island, and at Cape Schmidt, which were all announced in October. Most recently, the Russian navy successfully tested new underwater ballistic missiles in November, firing them from the Alexander Nevsky submarine in the Barents Sea, north of Scandinavia.

According to Chirkov, the construction of energy pipelines across sea will be another very important aspect of the navy's new strategy, with the cancellation of the South Stream Project confirmed. Although neither the US nor the EU have recognized

Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine earlier this year as legitimate, Moscow has always had a strong naval presence in the region in the form of the Black Sea Fleet, once a strategic Soviet Natal stronghold.

Russia military presence in Crimea has been maintained since 1997 after Ukraine and Russia struck a deal to share facilities on the Black Sea and in the Sea of Azov. Russia currently has more than 10.000 servicemen stationed there and other 40 warships under the control of the Black Sea Fleet. (AFY)

Vietnam's Sea Dispute Arbitration Case Vs China Promotes Peace : Manila

(<http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN0JS03O20141214?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>)

Vietnam has helped ensure peace in the South China Sea dispute with Beijing by following the Philippines in seeking U.N. arbitration despite the fact that Beijing has refused to take part. There are numerous countries that own their claim regarding South China Sea such as Beijing, Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan and China.

Vietnam on Thursday, Dec 11 submitted its position to a UN Arbitration Tribunal initiated by Philippines. It is being said that Vietnam's position towards the dispute is promoting the rule of law and finding peaceful and non-violent solutions to the South China Sea.

In May, China place its largest mobile oil rig close to Vietnam's

coast that prompted angry protests in Hanoi. Beijing has also seized control of Scarborough Shoal near the Philippines' main island. The Philippines and Vietnam appear to

be cooperating together due to the similar occurrences that happened to them. The two states will hold the first strategic defense dialogue in next year. (BAI)

EU Backs UN's Law of the Sea

(<http://www.undercurrentnews.com/2014/12/12/eu-backs-uns-law-of-the-sea/>)

European Union has stated the importance of international community to work together towards the sustainable use of oceans, to promote sustainable development, and to face up to the major threats confronting our marine environment. This message was delivered in UN General Assembly during a debate on two resolutions relating to the Law of the Sea and Sustainable fisheries.

The EU and its member states continue to believe that the UNCLOS represents the constitution of the oceans and establishes the overarching legal framework within which all activities in oceans and seas must be carried out. The EU also strongly supports the UN Fish Stock Agreement. This shows that EU has a strong commitment towards UN as responsible maritime power. (BAI)

Thailand Boats Seized, Not Sunk in Indonesia

(<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/449982/thai-fishing-boats-seized-not-sunk-in-indonesia>)

Two Thailand fishing boats have been seized after being caught trawling illegally in Indonesian waters. The Jakarta Post reported that an Indonesian Navy warship arrested the two boats off Anambas in Riau Island province

Dec 11, less than a week after sinking three Vietnamese vessels accused of illegal fishing in the same waters.

Both vessels and dozens of sailors were detained at the

Tarempa naval base on Siantan Island, Anambas Island regency. The navy said one of the boats falsely used an Indonesian name and flew the Indonesian flag. Its registered owner, Henri Rivai, is Indonesian. All crew members, including the captain, however, were Thai, Armabar said. The second boat was named the Tawa-

tesai, written in Thai script. The cases are being handled by Navy investigators in Tarempa.

Indonesia has vowed to sink all ships stealing their fish in a bid by President Joko Widodo. Indecisive action in the past had led to loss of 300 trillion rupiah a year from illegal fishing and 5400 illegal trawlers. (BAI)

Corruption Eradication Initiate To Improve Fisheries Sector: Minister

(<http://www.antaraneews.com/en/news/96813/corruption-eradication-initiate-to-improve-fisheries-sector-minister>)

Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Minister Susi Pudjiastuti has expressed support to the corruption eradication initiative, saying that corruption has, so far, been the reason for the low income generated by the sector. She pointed out that corruption and collusion have created an unfair business climate, thereby making Indonesia, which has abundant fisheries resources, a mere market for the ASEAN countries.

Minister Susi Pudjiastuti was optimistic that the neighboring

countries would buy fish directly from the ports in Indonesia and not through transshipment at sea. Illegal fishing activities have been rampant in Indonesia, so far, and fishing vessels have not auctioned their catch at ports.

Following the imposition of a moratorium on transshipment, Susi claimed to have heard about the depleting supply of fish to several neighboring countries, thereby causing an increase in the prices. (BAI)

Commercial Fisherman Mark Espert Says Government Needs to Rethink Fishing Reforms

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-12/commercial-fisherman-wants-nsw-government-reform-rethink/5960760>

2014 has been an astronomical year for catching fish for commercial fisherman said Mark Espert, 47-year-old fisherman. But his future is uncertain under a current State Government reform process.

Mark Espert says the kingfish in 2014 was the best he'd seen for years and made for exceptional fishing. He can catch 250 to 300 kilograms a week as a good week. But he says that the pelagic fish season this year has been astronomical.

Mark Espert holds 40 shares in New South Wales' Ocean Trap and Line - Line Fishing Western Zone and targets 10 to 12 different species of fish throughout the year. But his future in the fishery is uncertain due to plans by the NSW Government to reform the commercial fishing sector.

He says that the option papers presented to his fishery under the proposed reforms announced this year were unreasonable and would put him under a lot of pressure.

Mr Espert estimates with the current reform options, he would need to buy-out three businesses, securing another 120 shares, to give him enough fishing days to make the job viable.

The Government is now further consulting with industry after widespread concern voiced by commercial fishermen about the changes.

The Government is look after the young fisherman that are still in the industry, but the fisherman think that the older people that have been the platform of the industry for all these years should have a fair and reasonable buyout. The young fisherman think that the Government should give them the money they want to get out.

Mark Espert said that when all's said and done the young fisherman that are in the industry now are going to be the backbone and the older fisherman should be looked after.(MRA)

Jakarta to Build Sea wall to Combat Floods

<http://www.thenational.ae/world/southeast-asia/jakarta-to-build-sea-wall-to-combat-floods>

Jakarta has launched a multi-billion-dollar scheme to build a huge sea wall to combat flooding as the Indonesian capital sinks. The 35-kilometre wall, across the Bay of Jakarta off the city's northern coast, is the centrepiece of a project.

The aim of the sea wall is to prevent floods, it is hoped up to one million people will live and work on the islands, and help take pressure off a crowded city notorious as one of the world's most uninviting urban sprawls.

Jakarta has long been hit by floods during the rainy season, when tropical downpours cause rivers to burst their banks and deluge inadequate drainage systems, forcing tens of thousands out of their homes.

As Jakarta has rapidly grown to a population of about 10 million, increased water extraction for drinking has caused the ground to compact and parts of the city to sink.

Parts of coastal north of Jakarta, which is built on soft clay, are sinking as fast as 14 centimetres a year, which means they could be metres below sea level in a few decades, according to those behind the sea wall project.

After the 2007 floods, which forced hundreds of thousands out of their homes, officials scrambled to come up with a plan.

Work will then begin on the main wall, which will sit 6 to 8km from the coast and be 7km above sea level. The construction of the wall will be finished by 2030.

A huge reservoir will be created between the islands and sea wall, where water from downpours can be stored so it does not flood the city, and into which rivers will be able to flow freely.

Plans are also in progress to slow the land subsidence by providing piped water to Jakarta from other areas and stop extraction of ground water. (MRA)

New Species of Deep-Sea Coral Discovered Off California

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/new-species-deep-sea-coral-discovered-california-n242511>

The scientists have discovered a new species of deep-sea coral in underwater canyons off the Northern California coast, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in San Francisco. A NOAA research team were using small submersibles found the coral in September near national marine sanctuaries off the coast of Sonoma County to found the species.

The coral found were from the genus *Leptogorgia* and discovered about 600 feet deep in the first intensive exploration of underwater

canyons near the Gulf of Farallones and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries.

The scientists were collect data on the 4-inch-long white and red coral will help scientists determine the ecological importance of deep sea communities in the area and the threats they face.

In the two months before the research expedition, the scientists knew little about the marine life in the area. After multiple dives in the area, researchers also found a «highly unusual» nursery area for catsharks.(MRA)

Russia Warships Pass Through English Channel

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30248305>

A squadron of Russian warships has passed through the English Channel in what the Royal Navy described as a «routine» movement. The Russian warships was conduct military exercises.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that the ships had been escorted out of UK waters by

Royal Navy warship HMS Tyne. NATO reported increased incursions by Russian military vehicles following months of tension over Ukraine.

The UK Royal Navy and the French Navy said that its not unusual to have Russian warships transiting through the Channel.

It's the route they often choose to make their way to the Mediterranean.

In a statement released to the Russian news agency RIA Novosti, the Russian Northern Fleet said that its vessels were led by the Severomorsk destroyer and were anchored in French waters waiting for a storm to pass. The fleet is now north of the Normandy coast.

NATO spokesman said the ships are not exercising in the Channel. NATO indicates that the ships are transiting and have been delayed by weather conditions,

An MoD said that they are aware about four Russian naval ships have passed through the Dover Strait from the North Sea into the English Channel, which all ships have the right to do under international law. (MRA)