

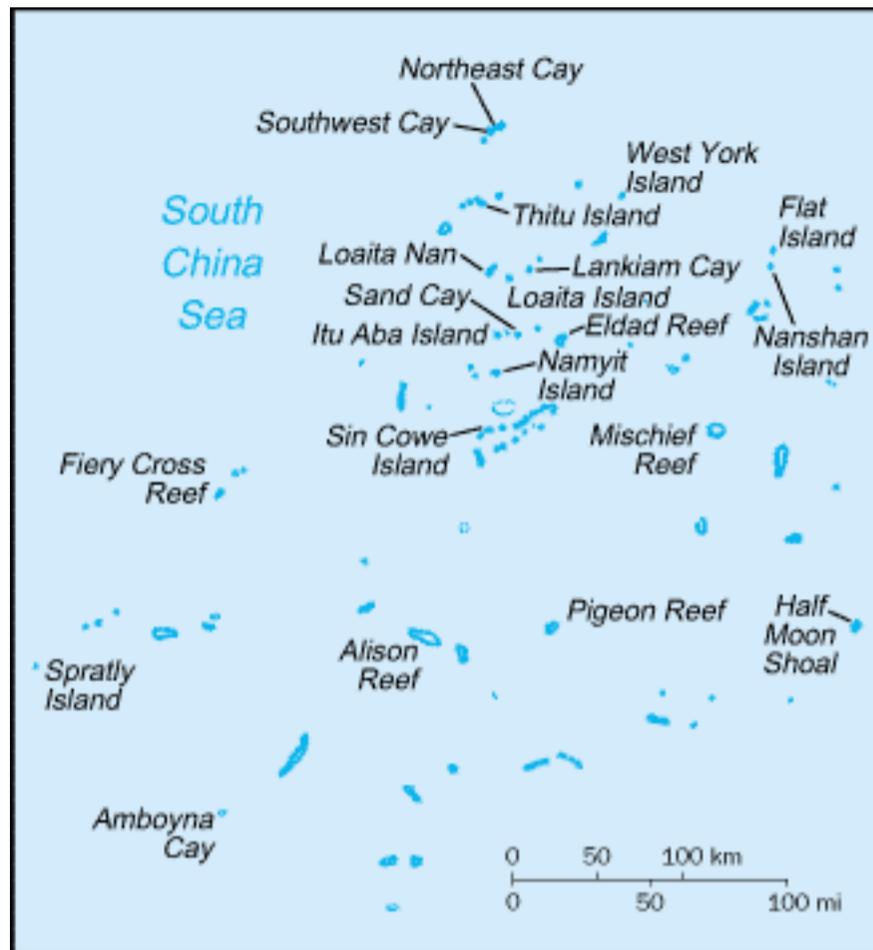


China Reacts to South China Sea Report

OE Watch Commentary: On 16 January, the accompanying excerpted article from the Chinese language website *sina.com* provided a Chinese perspective on a report by a South China Sea-focused American think tank called the Asian Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) about Chinese interference in the territorial waters of the Philippines. According to the article, the Philippines is acting in moderation regarding the issues mentioned in the report. The article also calls the report's claims speculation and refers to previous statements by the President of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, at the ASEAN Summit in which he stated that the US should recognize that China already has a presence in the South China Sea and should not do anything to cause friction.

In particular, the article objected to the report's claims that China was deploying fishing boats as a militia in the waters of the Philippines to perform patrols, surveil, and resupply the People's Liberation Army Navy presence in the Spratly Islands. Since these fishing boats seemed not to have commercial utility, the AMTI report concluded that their purpose was military in nature. The article in response to this report, however, did not provide evidence to refute or otherwise counter the report's claims. Rather, the article relied on the statements of officials in the Philippines to demonstrate that because they are not concerned about these Chinese fishing boats, the think tank must be overhyping the threat or stirring tensions unnecessarily.

There were also three policies noted in the article that attempts to demonstrate that the Philippines need not be concerned about these fishing boats: first, China and the Philippines have agreed that their relationships transcends the South China Sea and will not revolve around naval disputes; second, the two countries agreed to handle any disputes in a peaceful manner; and third, the two countries agreed to work with ASEAN, which includes the Philippines, to resolve matters in the South China Sea. China still considers the activities the report describes to not be unlawful or threatening to the Philippines. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Spratly Islands.

Source: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=552620>.

“The South China Sea is already in the hands of China, so why do you want to create friction?”

Source: “美智库称大量中国民兵现身南沙 菲律宾回应:纯属猜测 (A U.S. think tank reports that a large number of Chinese soldiers appeared in the Spratly Islands and the Philippines responded: it is only speculation),” *sina.com*, 16 January 2019. <https://mil.news.sina.com.cn/china/2019-01-16/doc-ihqhqcis6557560.shtml>

There were 76 incidents of piracy and armed robbery reported in Asia waters last year, the lowest in more than a decade. The number of significant incidents - which usually involved armed perpetrators, leading to violence against ships' crew in some cases - was 10 last year, the lowest in 12 years. In the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, there was a slight decrease in armed robbery cases from nine in 2017 to eight last year. The results were shared at the 10th Nautical Forum, which is ReCAAP's annual dialogue with maritime, diplomatic and shipping communities, attended by more than 150 representatives. “While the results do not tell us if the same patterns will continue in the future, what happened in the past can be quite useful for the shipping industry - when they go to certain locations, what kind of measures they have to take,” [Masafumi Kuruki] said.