



## [U.S. Warns China Against Provocative Behavior in the South China Sea and Reaffirms Its Commitment to the U.S.-Philippines Defense Treaty](#)

This week, the Biden administration warned China against its provocative behavior in the South China Sea, and also reaffirmed a commitment to the U.S.-Philippines Defense Treaty. Beijing has made efforts to exercise influence and control within the disputed areas in the region in order to obtain the plentiful resources. A ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague denied Chinese claims to the territories around the Philippines and accused them of infringing on the country's sovereignty. China has repeatedly harassed the Philippines' fishing boats and performed naval maneuvers in the area. After the United States reaffirmed its 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines, the U.S. Navy conducted freedom of navigation operations in the region, with China responding by contending that the United States was attempting to sow discord. Despite its continued provocations, China has denounced the actions of the United States on multiple occasions and tried to shift focus away from its own aggressive behavior.

The South China Sea has become increasingly militarized over the resources within the region. The area is claimed not only by China, but also by Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Despite the ruling in the international arbitration court, China has claimed ownership over the South China Sea by saying the waters are part of their Hainan province and significantly increased its presence there. China has reclaimed thousands of acres of land in the Sea and has installed ports, airstrips, barracks, and other buildings. They have also deployed missiles on the islands within the region, and have fired them into the sea from the mainland with the capability of destroying aircraft carriers.

As a result, the Philippines has been put on the defensive with regards to the South China Sea contentions. The Philippines has international support within the region and has attempted to allow fishing boats and other industrial endeavors to continue. However, the Chinese Coast Guard patrols the area daily, harassing fishermen and the Philippines' naval ships. The Philippines has attempted to send its coast guard forces into the region, but their vessels are no match for the Chinese ships which easily chase them off. This has driven the Philippines to seek international support, especially from the United States, in the hope of containing China without any escalating conflict. The array of resources within the South China Sea region makes it a hotbed for territorial disputes between nearby countries.

The United States' interest in defending the Philippines' claims in the area also provides an opportunity to try and contain China. Nations in Southeast Asia have seen the increasing influence of China in the region, which has led some of them to desire closer relations with the West to offset the power China holds. This allows the United States easier access to the area around China and a way to limit its expansive tendencies. The United States also has an interest in enforcing international law so that territorial and maritime disputes can be resolved with diplomacy instead of conflict. The hope is that courts can continue to decide the best outcomes, as opposed to countries simply claiming certain areas and taking them by force.