

► Groundless accusations may lead to standoff: analyst

Philippines sends monitoring ships, provokes China in SCS

By Deng Xiaoci and
Zhang Wanshi

Amid rising tensions in the South China Sea, the Philippines' coast guard has taken a further provocative step, deploying a ship to monitor what it deems are China's "illegal activities" in waters adjacent to China's Xianbin Jiao, also known as Xianbin Reef.

The Philippines also made groundless accusations on Saturday of China's construction of an "artificial island." Chinese analysts cautioned on Sunday that such provocations could spark a standoff, amplifying the strain on bilateral relations and exacerbating tensions across the entire South China Sea region.

According to a statement released by the Office of the President of Philippines on Sunday, the Philippine

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Coast Guard (PSG) has deployed the BRP *Teresa Magbanua* to monitor the supposed "illegal activities of China," which is creating "an artificial island" on what it calls the Escoda Shoal in the West Philippine Sea by destroying the coral reefs.

According to Reuters on Saturday, PSG spokesperson Commodore Jay Tarriela told a forum there had been "small-scale reclamation" of China's Xianbin Jiao, which Manila calls Escoda, and that China was "the most probable actor."

Such claims are in total disregard of the fact that Xianbin Jiao is an integral part of China's Nansha Qundao and China has indisputable sovereignty over Nansha Qundao and the

adjacent waters, analysts said.

The accusation of the so-called China's building of artificial islands and worries over the natural environment are both groundless, and they are all disinformation and are an excuse for the Philippines to justify its maritime provocations, Chen Xiangmiao, director of the World Navy Research Center at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, told the Global Times on Sunday.

By portraying itself as a victim in the region, the Philippines is trying to convince the international community that China is the one jeopardizing the status quo. Such move calls for timely clarification with facts, Chen noted.

Philippines' recent provocations have escalated, with the core factor being support from the US, analysts said on Sunday.

S.Korean FM to visit China; talks on trilateral leaders' meeting expected to top agenda

By GT staff reporters

As South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul is set to visit China from Monday to Tuesday, Chinese observers said that negotiating arrangements for a long-stalled trilateral leaders' meeting among China, Japan and South Korea will be a top priority. Cho's trip is being closely watched as observers wonder whether this visit will address current obstacles and pave the way for a fresh start in relations between China and South Korea.

Cho will visit China from Monday to Tuesday at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian announced on Friday.

During the visit, Cho will meet with Wang to exchange views on issues of mutual interests including Korea-China relations, the Korea-Japan-China trilateral leaders meeting, Korean Peninsula issues, and regional and global affairs, according to a press release from South Korea's foreign ministry on Friday.

South Korea, the current rotating chair of the trilateral dialogue, is eager to realize the trilateral meeting, which is also a top priority of Cho's trip, said Lü Chao, an expert on the Korean Peninsula at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences.

The meeting has long been stalled due to COVID-19 pandemic, a soured relationship among the three countries and US disruption that has created obstacles for the three countries to cooperate, Lü argued.

Chinese experts noted the widening divergences between Beijing and Seoul on the diplomatic front, caused mainly because of South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol's leaning toward the US and malicious statements about the island of Taiwan, South China Sea and other China-related issues. They view such divergences as unavoidable differences between two sides.

"Cho's trip, the first trip to Beijing by a South Korean top diplomat in more than six years, is set to cover the current obstacles facing the two countries and explore ways to solve the pressing problems," Lü said.

The Yoon administration is mired in a severe quagmire after South Korea's liberal opposition party won a landslide victory in the country's parliamentary elections in April.

"Under such circumstances, we will wait and see whether Yoon is going to reassess the one-sided and erroneous foreign policy and economic policies toward the US in the past two years. This is also what China hopes to know," Lü said.

► Commencement protest



A graduate student wearing a Palestinian decorated graduation cap walks down the aisle during commencement at the DKR-Texas Memorial Stadium on US local time May 11, 2024 in Austin, Texas. Amid nationwide tension on college campuses over the war between Israel and Hamas, students continue protesting and calling for universities to divest from Israel. Photo: AFP

US might fail to stop Israel from attacking Rafah; 'Biden's influence over Netanyahu limited'

By Yang Sheng

Although the US is recently increasing criticism over Israel and its warnings that Washington will stop weapon supply if the Israeli military forces launch full attack against Rafah, Israeli Prime Minister has defied the warning from US President Joe Biden by reaffirming his determination to maintain the war in Gaza.

Chinese analysts said on Sunday that it seems like the US is losing influence over its

ally Israel and the Biden administration has lost many chances to stop the bloodshed, and a large number of civilian casualties would be unavoidable if Israel insists on its plan, and the international community would condemn not only Israel but also the US.

The Biden administration said Friday that Israel's use of US-provided weapons in Gaza likely violated international humanitarian law but that "wartime conditions prevented US officials from determin-

ing that for certain in specific airstrikes," the AP reported on Saturday.

Biden said on Thursday while the US would continue to provide defensive weapons to Israel, other shipments would end should a major ground invasion of Rafah begin, CNN reported.

However, Netanyahu said on Thursday in a thinly veiled rebuff to Biden's warning that arms supplies could be withheld over a planned operation in Gaza, Reuters said on Friday.

Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, said that the most recent situation and remarks made by the leaders of the US and Israel showed that Washington can make very limited impact on the Netanyahu administration.

"Israel has gained enough weapons and ammos since the very beginning of the conflict from not only the US but also other Western countries, so even if the US stop the military

supports immediately by now, Israel is still able to continue the war," Liu said.

Experts said Netanyahu won't stop at this point because as long as Hamas continues to exist in Rafah, the Israeli military operation will be considered as failure, and the opposition will use this to attack Netanyahu and make him and his followers accountable.

