

American War Games directed against China: U.S. and Philippines Test China's Military Nerves

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-“The U.S is rapidly losing its influence in South East Asia, and is trying to keep the status quo not through diplomacy, but with the flexing of military muscle. The exercises are designed to prevent a likely Chinese invasion of the disputed territory. Of course, Beijing has no such intentions, but it is important for America to show that it still has allies in the area. China’s reaction will be extremely negative. Beijing usually defends its territories very robustly, and will do the same over the disputed Spratly archipelago.”

The U.S and the Philippines are carrying out large-scale military exercises near the Spratly Islands in South China sea, which are reported to be an energy trove. Washington and Manila say that the exercises do not pose a threat to Beijing. The ownership of the Spratly Islands are claimed by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei and even Taiwan.

The U.S and the Philippines agreed to carry out the exercises towards the end of June immediately after the escalation between Beijing and Manila in the region of the Spratlys. The Philippine navy deliberately removed some Chinese installations in the disputed region, declaring a readiness to robustly defend the region. Beijing responded by staging large-scale military exercises, speaking about plans to increase the number of patrol boats in the disputed archipelago. The situation in the area has worsened significantly in recent years, says Vladimir Portakov, deputy Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute for the Far East:

“The escalation is due to two factors. The first is the expiration of the UN moratorium on the submission of ownership claims over the shelf adjacent to the islands. The second factor is the discovery of huge reserves of gas and oil in the region. That is why the situation has worsened and why the Philippines and Vietnam have stepped up their activities. In May this year, Chinese fishing trawlers and geology research vessels were hounded out of the area. Vietnam and the U.S. have used the opportunity to strengthen their position in the region. Some countries, among them the Philippines, have started to use their connection with the U.S to push their ownership claims over the disputed islands. The joint training exercises by the U.S and the Philippines should be seen in this context”, Vladimir Portakov said.

The U.S Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, has blessed the exercises, speaking of America’s unqualified support of the Philippines in the ownership dispute with China. Alexei Maslov of the Higher School of Economy looks at another vital feature of the joint military exercises:

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quo not through diplomacy, but with the flexing of military muscle. The exercises are designed to prevent a likely Chinese invasion of the disputed territory. Of course, Beijing has no such intentions, but it is important for America to show that it still has allies in the area. China's reaction will be extremely negative. Beijing usually defends its territories very robustly, and will do the same over the disputed Spratly archipelago."

The Philippines remains, in essence, the only real ally of the U.S in South East Asia, but it is taking a great risk by teaming up with America to conduct military exercises, which are obviously meant to annoy Beijing. Manila wants to show that it is not a lapdog of China, that it pursues an independent policy in South East Asia.

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