# Tensions Escalate in South China Sea as Chinese Forces Seize Philippine Boats



On June 17, 2024, tensions escalated in the South China Sea when Chinese forces seized two Philippine rubber boats delivering supplies to a military outpost at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal. The incident resulted in injuries to several Filipino navy personnel, including one who lost a thumb. The confrontation also involved collisions between vessels from both nations.

The Philippine government blamed China for "dangerous maneuvers" that hindered the supply mission to BRP Sierra Madre, the ship serving as the outpost since its deliberate grounding in 1999. China, in contrast, claimed the Philippine boats ignored warnings and risked a collision by approaching Chinese vessels unprofessionally.

The incident prompted the U.S. to reaffirm its commitment to the 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines, which covers attacks on armed forces and vessels in the region. Philippine Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. criticized China's actions, calling them obstacles to peace and stability.

The Second Thomas Shoal remains a flashpoint in the wider South China Sea dispute, with China’s aggressive territorial claims clashing with those of the Philippines and other regional actors.