# Philippine Military Chief Calls for Return of Seized Equipment from Chinese Coast Guard



**Philippine Military Chief Demands Return of Seized Equipment by Chinese Coast Guard**

**Manila, Philippines, June 19, 2024** — The Philippine military has demanded the return of rifles and equipment seized by the Chinese coast guard in an incident at the Second Thomas Shoal, a disputed territory in the South China Sea. The confrontation occurred on June 17, 2024, when Chinese personnel aboard more than eight motorboats rammed and boarded two inflatable Philippine navy boats attempting to deliver supplies to a Philippine outpost. The Chinese seized eight M4 rifles, navigation equipment, and other provisions, injuring several Filipino naval personnel, with one losing a thumb.

General Romeo Brawner Jr., head of the Philippine armed forces, labeled the incident as an act of piracy and demanded the return of the seized items and compensation for the damages caused. "They're now like pirates with this kind of actions," said Brawner. The Chinese coast guard personnel used machetes, knives, and hammers during the skirmish.

In response, China's Foreign Ministry claimed the Filipino personnel "trespassed" into the shoal and that the Chinese coast guard acted with restraint in what it termed a professional law enforcement measure. The Philippines and China have been in a standoff over the Second Thomas Shoal for years. The United States, a treaty ally of the Philippines, reiterated its defense obligations amid rising tensions in the region.

Tensions have escalated since last year, particularly around the Second Thomas Shoal, where the BRP Sierra Madre, a grounded Philippine warship, serves as a naval outpost. This event follows an earlier incident this month, where the Philippines accused China of hindering a medical evacuation mission.

The Second Thomas Shoal, part of the disputed Spratly Islands, is claimed by both China and the Philippines, alongside claims from Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan. The ongoing disputes in the South China Sea pose significant risks of escalating into broader regional conflicts.