# Philippines and China in Tense Standoff over Second Thomas Shoal



**Philippines and China Engage in Tense Standoff at Second Thomas Shoal**

The Second Thomas Shoal, part of the disputed South China Sea, has become a focal point of tension between the Philippines and China. The shoal is closer to the Philippines and lies within its exclusive economic zone. The Philippine Navy has been using the grounded ship, Sierra Madre, as a military installation in this area.

In recent events, Chinese paramilitary vessels have aggressively confronted Philippine ships. They have used water cannons and physical threats against Filipino boats. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed the Philippine Navy to reinforce the Sierra Madre, leading to increased hostilities. He has also warned that any fatal conflict involving Filipino soldiers could be considered an act of war.

The Philippines had previously won a 2016 arbitration against China under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which affirmed its control over the Second Thomas Shoal. However, China has ignored this ruling. Efforts by the Philippines to get stronger support from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have also not been successful.

The United States, having a mutual defense agreement with the Philippines, has indicated that any attack on the Sierra Madre will invoke this pact. To show support, the US and the Philippines plan to conduct joint maritime exercises in the contested waters.

U.S Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell states that both the Philippines and the US aim to avoid escalating tensions while maintaining a firm stance. Moreover, the Philippines is planning another resupply mission to the Sierra Madre, highlighting the ongoing volatility in the region.