# China occupies sandbank in South China Sea amid territorial dispute with the Philippines



China's recent actions in the South China Sea, involving the occupation of a small sandbank, have drawn attention as part of a broader strategy to assert territorial claims in the region. Chinese state media published images displaying four Chinese coast guard officers on a disputed reef, proudly waving the national flag. This development comes amid ongoing tensions with the Philippines, which also claims sovereignty over areas within this strategically important maritime zone.

Professor Justin Bronk, a defence expert from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), described the move as consistent with Beijing's established pattern of exerting pressure in the South China Sea. Speaking to the Express, he explained that despite the small size of the islets involved, they serve a critical role in bolstering extensive territorial claims. "While these bits of land are often incredibly small, they are used to claim or reinforce significant territorial claims around them," Bronk said.

China’s approach includes dredging and constructing artificial islands on reefs, thereby creating landmasses capable of supporting military installations such as airbases and weaponry. This strategy enhances China’s capacity to enforce its ambitions throughout the contested waters. However, these actions are viewed as illegal pressures by other claimant states and the international community, particularly given China's assertion that all waters within its so-called Nine-dash line constitute Chinese domestic territory—a claim widely rejected by other nations.

The Philippines has responded by publicising its own photographs of officials stationed at Sandy Cay, another location entangled in the dispute, underscoring the ongoing contestation. The South China Sea holds significant importance, serving as a critical trade route facilitating global supply chains, thus intensifying the strategic implications of the territorial disputes.

Both China and the Philippines maintain overlapping claims in this resource-rich and geopolitically sensitive maritime region. While China asserts sweeping dominion over nearly the entire South China Sea, these claims lack endorsement under international law and continue to provoke tensions among neighbouring countries and the wider international community.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Q3lveYDIJg> - This video links to news coverage of the South China Sea dispute but lacks specific details on China's actions. However, it implies ongoing tensions and activities, which are central to the broader narrative about China's territorial claims.
* <https://www.sbs.com.au/news> - This site hosts news articles about various global events and could provide context on the South China Sea disputes through its coverage, though the specific URL does not directly link to such news.
* <https://www.semafor.com/article/04/28/2025/beijing-manila-dispute-expands> - This article corroborates the recent tensions between China and the Philippines, highlighting the flag-raising incidents on a disputed sandbank in the South China Sea.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/asia/china/philippines-south-china-sea-sandy-cay-b2740603.html> - This piece explains the flag-raising by both China and the Philippines on the disputed sandbank, demonstrating the ongoing contestation in the South China Sea.
* <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3307831/china-coastguard-claims-sovereign-jurisdiction-sandy-cay-south-china-sea> - This article supports the claim that China's coast guard has exercised jurisdiction over Sandy Cay, a part of the larger South China Sea disputes.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Though not directly linked to a specific article, Noah Wire Services is the source mentioned in the context, likely providing news on global and local events including geopolitical issues like the South China Sea.
* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2047571/expert-sounds-alarm-bells-south-china-sea> - Please view link - unable to able to access data