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U.S. destroyer challenges China's claims in South China Sea

August 10, 2017 reuters.com reported: "A U.S. Navy destroyer carried out a "freedom of navigation operation" on Thursday, coming within 12 nautical miles of an artificial island built up by China in the South China Sea, U.S. officials told Reuters. The operation came as President Donald Trump's administration seeks Chinese cooperation in dealing with North Korea's missile and nuclear programs and could complicate efforts to secure a common stance.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the USS John S. McCain traveled close to Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands, among a string of islets, reefs and shoals. China has territorial disputes with its neighbors over the area. It was the third "freedom of navigation operation" during Trump's presidency.

Thursday's operation, first reported by Reuters, was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters, and comes as Trump is seeking China's cooperation to rein in North Korea. China's foreign ministry said the operation had violated international and Chinese law and seriously harmed Beijing's sovereignty and security.

"China is very displeased with this and will bring up the issue with the U.S. side," the ministry said in a statement.

The United States has criticized China's construction of islands and build-up of military facilities in the sea, and is concerned they could be used to restrict free nautical movement. Twelve nautical miles marks the territorial limits recognized internationally. Sailing within those 12 miles is meant to show that the United States does not recognize territorial claims there.

The United States has said that it would like to see more international participation in freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. The U.S. military has a long-standing position that its operations are carried out throughout the world, including in areas claimed by allies, and they are separate from political considerations. The Trump administration has vowed to conduct more robust South China Sea operations."..."

Chinese paper says China should stay neutral if North Korea attacks first

August 10, 2017 Reuters reported: "If North Korea launches an attack that threatens the United States then China should stay neutral, but if the United States attacks first and tries to overthrow North Korea's government China will stop them, a Chinese state-run newspaper said on Friday.

President Donald Trump ratcheted up his rhetoric toward North Korea and its leader on Thursday, warning Pyongyang against attacking Guam or U.S. allies after it disclosed plans to fire missiles over Japan to land near the U.S. Pacific territory.

China, North Korea's most important ally and trading partner, has reiterated calls for calm during the current crisis. It has expressed frustration with both Pyongyang's repeated nuclear and missile tests and with behavior from South Korea and the United States that it sees as escalating tensions. "..."

Mosque 'invasion' decimating churches across France

August 9, 2017 WND.com reports: "Many Muslim immigrants express a sentiment of entitlement, believing they one day will replace the natives and the land in which they are strangers will come under the authority of Islamic law. It's already happening in France, according to a report published by the Gatestone Institute by Giulio Meotti, cultural editor for Il Folgio.

He says, in the last 30 years, more mosques and Muslim prayer centers 'have been built in France than all the Catholic churches built in the last century.'

At the same time, Christian churches are being bulldozed. Meotti notes that France has laws protecting old trees, but 'the state is free to flatten old Christian churches' and 'the vacuums created in the French landscape are already being filled by the booming mosques.'

France is able to demolish old churches because the government appropriated all church property and the cost of maintaining them in 1907..."

Pentagon may boost support to Philippine counter-IS ops: official

August 8, 2017 spacewar.com reported: "The United States is weighing additional support to the Philippine military as it fights an Islamist insurgency in the south, a US defense official said Tuesday. Discussions are "pretty advanced" and would see the US provide increased surveillance drone capabilities and training for local forces, the official told AFP on condition on anonymity.

The drones could hypothetically be used to conduct strikes, the official added, although that would only be for self-defense reasons to protect US or partner forces, and would not signal another front in America's drone wars.

"It's not necessarily what those (drones) are there for. Those are there for ISR and support," the official said, using an abbreviation for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

The Philippines' Department of National Defense said there had been no discussions regarding the use of US drones to strike IS-inspired "terrorist groups."

Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Chris Logan said all military assistance in the Philippines is conducted at the request of the government.

"We respect the sovereignty of the Philippines, and we are not pursuing unilateral action in the Philippines," he said.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has asked lawmakers to approve the recruiting of 20,000 more soldiers to tackle increased security threats following a bloody urban siege in the south. Almost 700 people have been killed, according to the official count, in over two months of fighting in

the southern city of Marawi against Islamist militants who have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group.”...”

‘Iranian empire is being established – and the US does nothing’

August 8, 2017 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: “Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett (Jewish Home) warned that the West is ignoring the greatest threat to global security in its fight against ISIS, trading away long-term strategic security for short-term tactical gains.

In an opinion piece published by The Wall Street Journal on Monday, Bennett argued that while ISIS had captured the West’s attention, the Tehran regime has been quietly expanding its influence across the region, working to establish radical Shi’ite hegemony over large portions of the Middle East.

‘Since its 1979 revolution, Iran has sought to become a dominant world power capable of instilling Islamic rule on as many people as possible. The Iranian regime finances and supports armed militias in other countries and is the world’s top exporter of terror.’

While ISIS atrocities have sparked outrage, Bennett claims Iran represents a far deadlier long-term threat, one which could extend far beyond the Middle East...”

North Korea Threat Comes After Trump Vows ‘Fire and Fury’

August 8, 2017 wsj.com reported: “President Donald Trump bluntly warned North Korea against making any more threats to the U.S., saying the country “will be met with the fire and fury and frankly power, the likes of which this world has never seen before.”

Mr. Trump’s stark comments reflect deep concern within the administration about both the progress North Korea has made in recent months its nuclear-weapons program, as well provocative statements this week that seemingly rejected negotiations over curbing that program. The president’s brief remarks likely were aimed both at North Korea, which this week openly threatened to use nuclear weapons, and at China, in hopes of alarming the Chinese into doing their part to enforce new United Nations economic sanctions against North Korea.

Shortly after Mr. Trump spoke at his golf resort in New Jersey, North Korea made a specific threat to attack the U.S. territory of Guam, in the Pacific, saying its military is “carefully examining” a plan for a missile strike on the U.S. military base on Guam. The rare explicit threat to the U.S., made through North Korea’s official media, was just hours after Mr. Trump’s comments.”...”

North Korea threatens ‘thousands-fold’ revenge on US over sanctions

August 7, 2017 News.Sky.com reported: “North Korea has threatened to launch ‘thousands-fold’ revenge against the US after tough UN sanctions were imposed on it following the test firing of intercontinental ballistic missiles. In a statement on Monday, Pyongyang said the sanctions were caused by a ‘heinous US plot to isolate and stifle’ North Korea.

‘We will not put our self-defensive nuclear deterrent on the negotiating table,’ it said, ‘and will never take a single step back from strengthening our nuclear might’.

The statement, carried by North Korea’s official Korea Central News Agency, also threatened to make the US ‘pay the price for its crime... thousands of times’. It said the UN sanctions would not force the country to negotiate over its nuclear programme or give up its ambitions and warned it would take ‘action of justice’, although it did not elaborate on what that means...”

Jordan’s King calls on U.S. to support ‘Palestinian issue’

August 7, 2017 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: “Jordan’s King Abdullah II said on Sunday there will be no breakthrough in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) if there is no U.S. commitment to supporting a solution to the ‘Palestinian issue’.

‘Without the Hashemite custodianship and the steadfastness of the Jerusalemites, the holy sites would have been lost many years ago. Our success requires one to stand with the Palestinian brothers, so that our cause wouldn’t be weakened and our rights would be maintained,’ he told members of the Lower House of Parliament, according to a report in the official Petra news agency.

The King warned that the future of the Palestinian issue is at stake and reaching a solution is becoming even more difficult. In this context, he called for more efforts and intensive work with the U.S. administration to make the necessary progress...”

Kissinger: End of Islamic State Could Lead To ‘Iranian Radical Empire’

August 7, 2017 Breitbart.com reported: “If the Islamic State is destroyed, the situation in the Middle East could end up being even more dire with the emergence of an ‘Iranian radical empire’ in its wake, (94 year-old) former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger warned in an article published by CapX this week.

Kissinger cautioned that in the case of IS and Iran, the old aphorism ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ no longer holds water, since driving out the Sunni terror group would leave a ‘territorial belt reaching from Tehran to Beirut’ that Iranian-trained Shia forces could occupy...”