

# China's Activities in the South China Sea

July 28, 2015  
Ministry of Defense

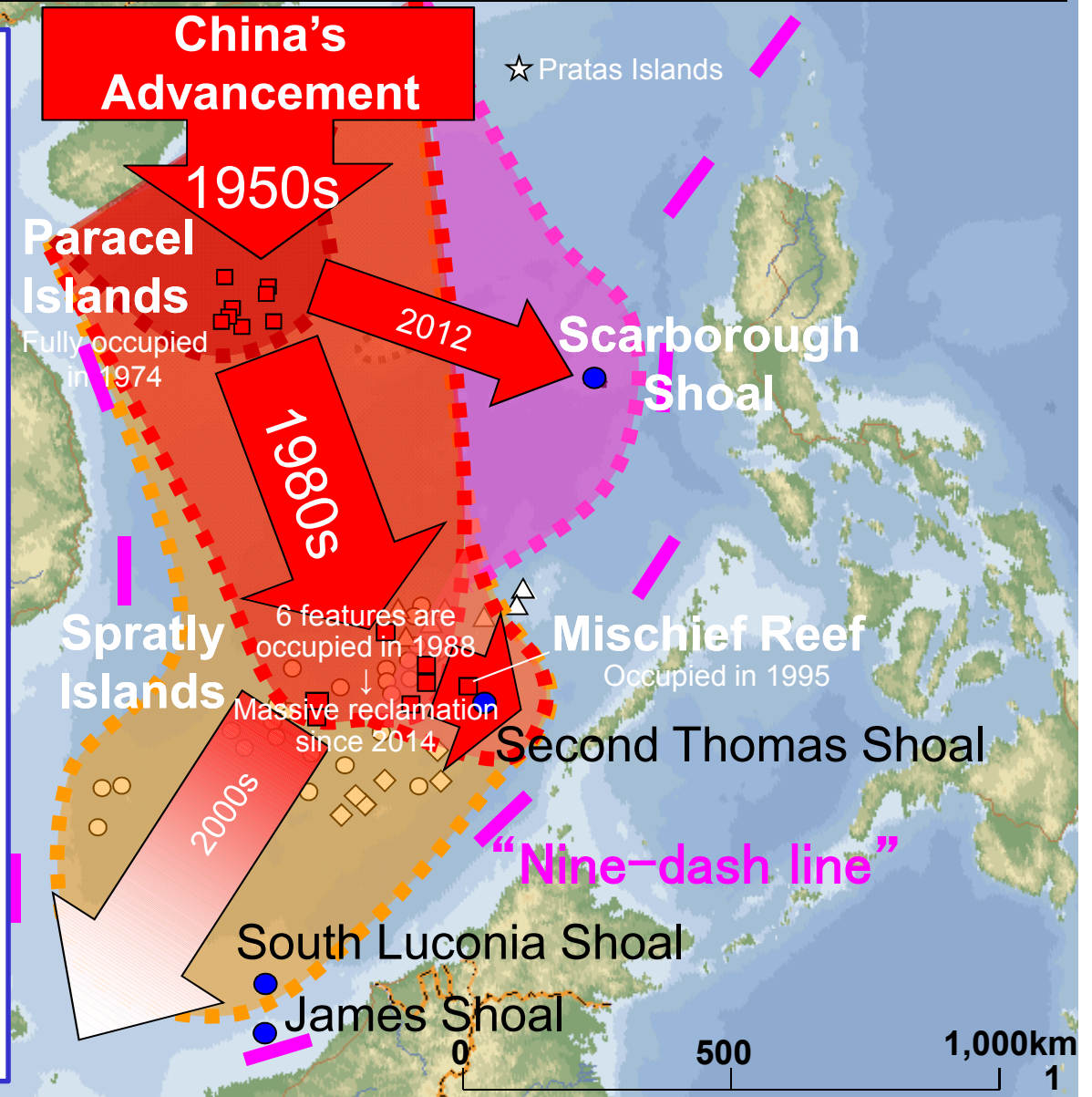


# 1-1 China Makes Advances into South China Sea (SCS)

China has made advances into the SCS **exploiting power vacuums** (1950s-70s: Paracel Islands; 80s-: Spratly Islands)

## Timeline

- 1950s: France withdraws from French Indochina
- ↓
- 1950s: China occupies half of Paracel Islands (South Vietnam also advances to Paracel Islands)
- ↓
- 1973: U.S. withdraws from South Vietnam
- ↓
- 1974: China occupies entire Paracel Islands (dislodging South Vietnam)
- (1975: Collapse of South Vietnam (after Vietnam War))
- Mid-1980s: Soviet presence in Vietnam decreased
- ↓
- 1980s: China advances to Spratly Islands
- 1988: China occupies six features in Spratly Islands
- 1992: US withdraws from the Philippines
- ↓
- 1995: China occupies Mischief Reef
- 2000s: China advances to southern SCS
- 2012: China gains *de facto* control over Scarborough Shoal
- 2014-: China conducts **large-scale reclamation** in SCS





# 1-2 China's Maritime Push and Armed Clashes

As China sought to gain control over new maritime features, it came into two armed clashes with Vietnam in 1974 and 1988.

**In January 1974**, China sent a naval fleet (six ships incl. patrol boats) with militia onboard to **western portion of the Paracels**, which China had not occupied. Armed clashes with South Vietnamese frigates and other ships ensued.

Losses/Casualties (China)  
Four vessels damaged  
85 killed or injured



Losses/Casualties (South Vietnam)  
One vessel sunk, three damaged  
100+ killed or injured



South Vietnam withdrew, **China occupied the entire Paracel Islands.**

**In January 1988**, China, which had possessed no foothold in the Spratlys, sent a naval fleet to Fiery Cross Reef and built a structure on the Reef. **In March same year**, three Chinese frigates clashed with three Vietnamese ships including a landing ship at **Johnson South Reef**.

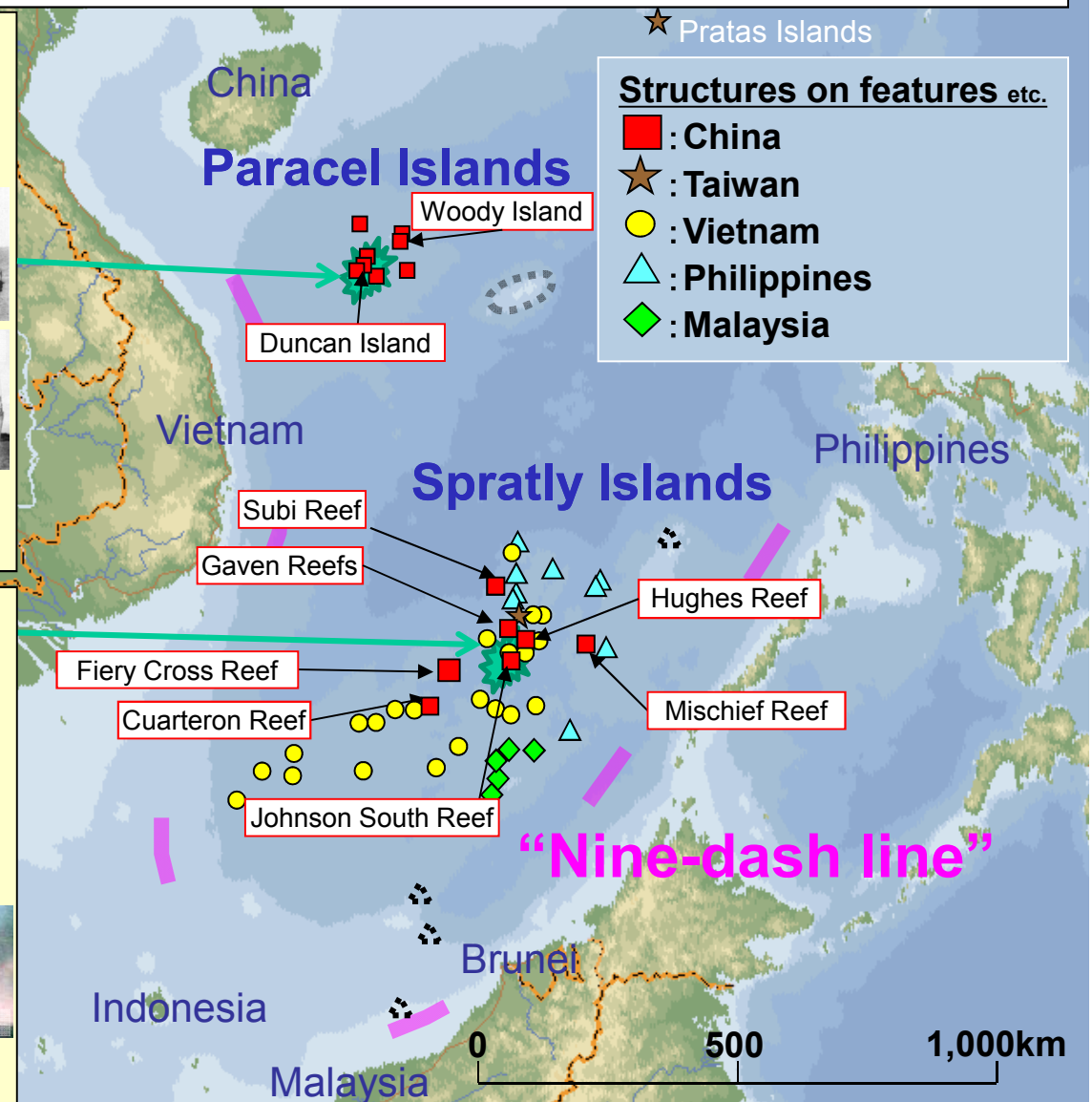
Losses/Casualties (China)  
One killed



Losses/Casualties (Vietnam)  
Two vessels sunk, one damaged  
400+ killed or injured



Vietnam withdrew, **China occupied Johnson South Reef.**



※ On the causes of these two clashes, China cited South Vietnam's illegitimate incursions and provocations.

(Ref.) Ministry of National Defense of China, Various press reports etc.





# 1-3 Activities by PLA, Maritime Law Enforcement Forces (MLEF) etc.

① In June 2010, near **Natuna Islands**, China's MLEF vessel allegedly aimed a cannon at an Indonesian patrol vessel that seized a Chinese fishing boat.

② In May 2011, off the coast of Vietnam, China's MLEF (China Maritime Surveillance) vessel allegedly obstructed the operation of Vietnamese resource exploration ship, and cut the cables that it was laying.

③ In June 2011, around **Vanguard Bank**, Chinese vessel allegedly obstructed the navigation of operating Vietnamese resource exploration ship.

④ After the confrontation against Vietnamese vessels in 2012, China's MLEF (China Coast Guard) vessels have maintained their presence around **Scarborough Shoal**.

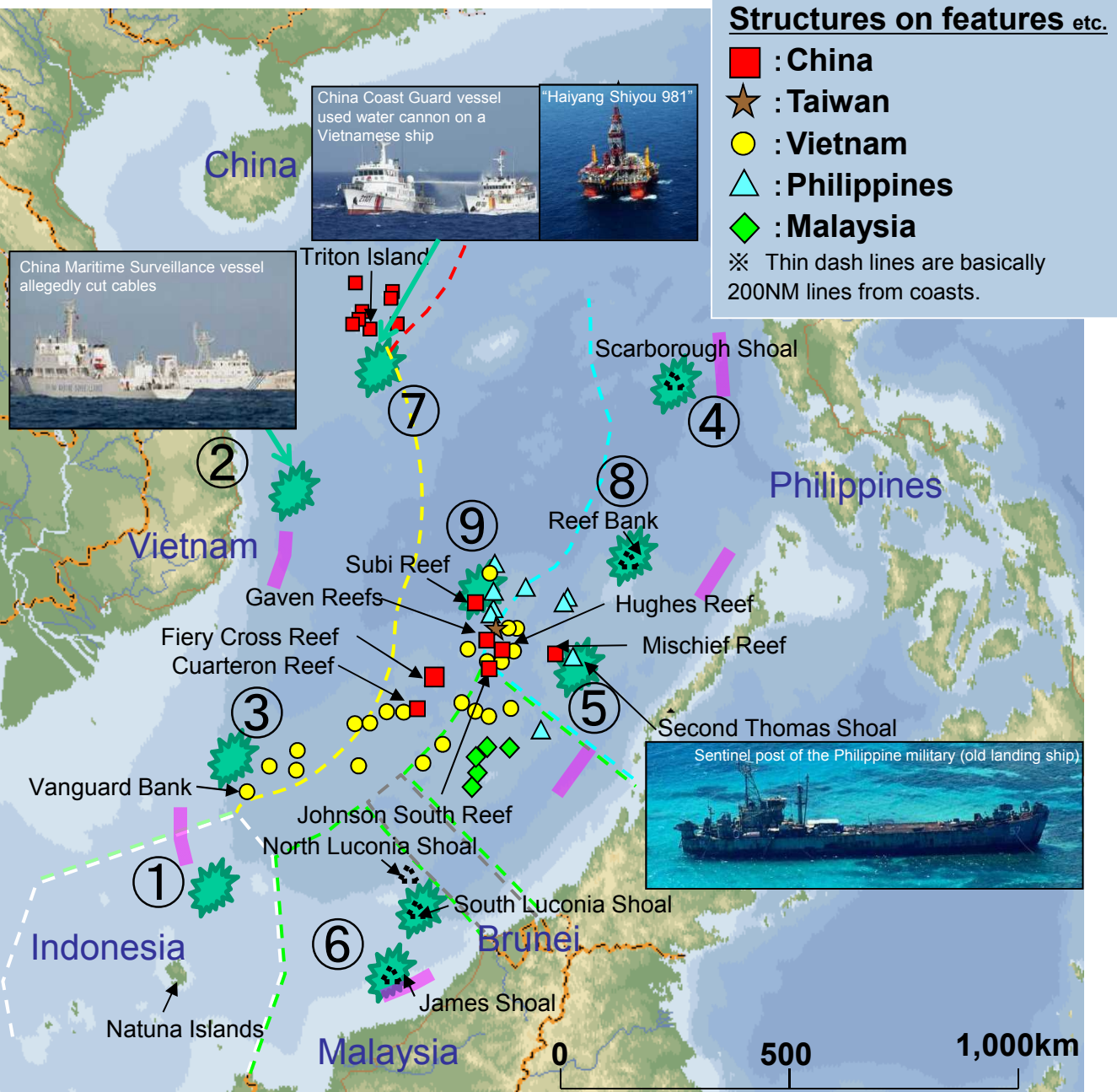
⑤ In May 2013, PLAN and China's MLEF vessels allegedly blocked the Philippine military's supply mission to its sentinel post (old landing ship) at **Second Thomas Shoal**.

⑥ In October 2013, China allegedly sent MLEF vessels near **South Luconia Shoal**. Moreover, in January 2014, PLAN vessels allegedly conducted activities near **James Shoal**.

⑦ From May to July 2014, to the south of **Triton Island**, China placed oil rigs with escort of PLAN and MLEF (China Coast Guard) vessels, and faced off against Vietnamese vessels.

⑧ In August 2014, China's MLEF (China Coast Guard) vessels allegedly put markers around **Reed Bank**. Also in 2011, Chinese vessels obstructed the navigation of Philippine ship in the same area.

⑨ In April 2015, the Philippines expressed concern about a series of China's actions near **Subi Reef**, such as aiming powerful light to Philippine Air Force plane and warning to leave the area.



**Structures on features etc.**

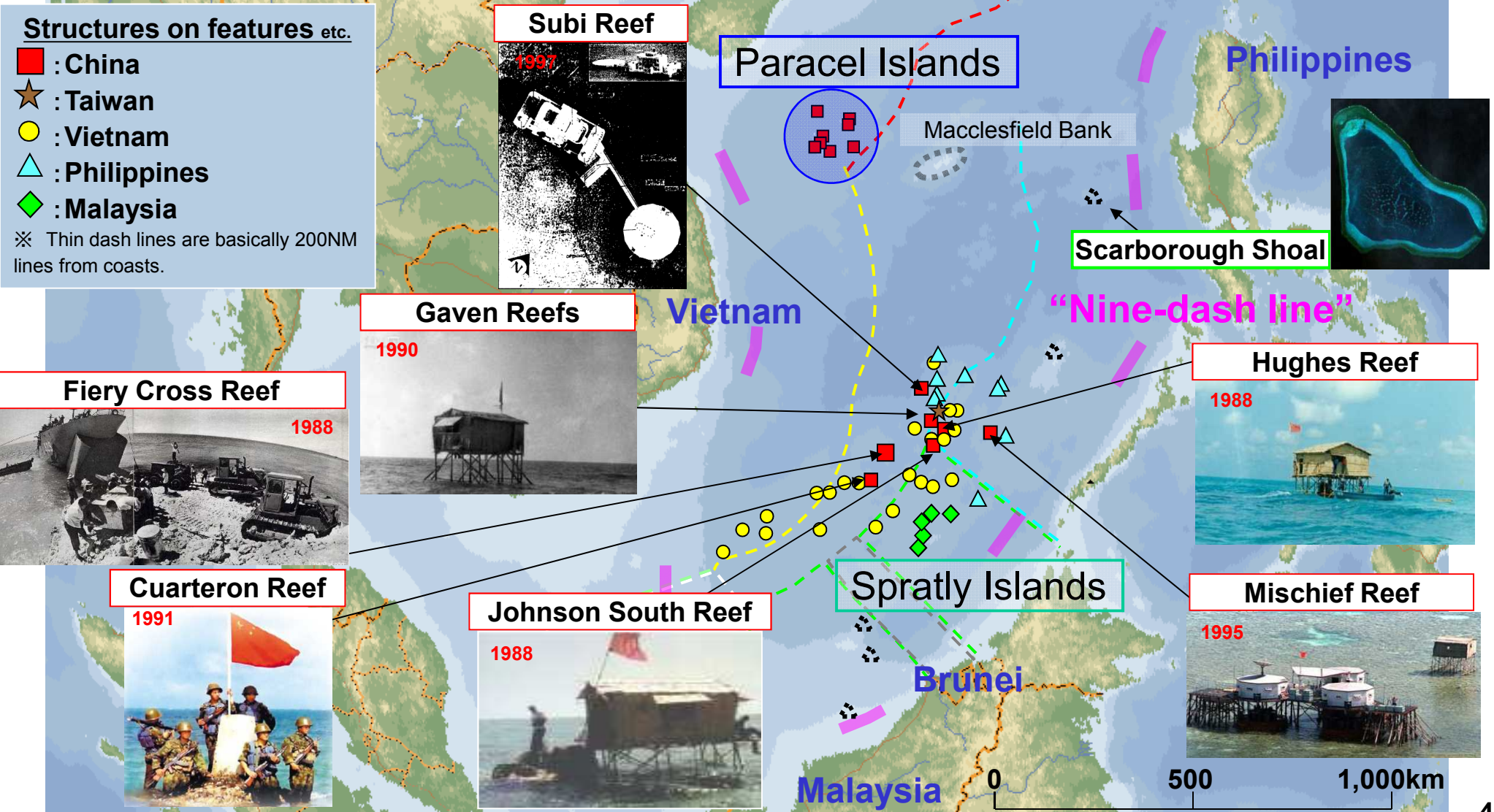
- : China
- ★ : Taiwan
- : Vietnam
- ▲ : Philippines
- ◆ : Malaysia
- ※ Thin dash lines are basically 200NM lines from coasts.

(Ref.) Various press reports etc.



# 2-1 China's Occupation in SCS (before reclamation)

- China gained **de facto control over seven maritime features** in the Spratlys and **built structures at all of the seven features**.
- Based on its sovereignty claim, China has taken legislative and administrative actions such as the enactment of the **Law on Territorial Sea (1992)** and establishment of **Sansha City and the Sansha Security District (2012)**.



(Ref.) Various press reports etc.





# 2-2 China's Occupation in SCS (after reclamation)

### Structures on features etc.

- : China
- ★ : Taiwan
- : Vietnam
- ▲ : Philippines
- ◆ : Malaysia

※ Thin dash lines are basically 200NM lines from coasts.

China engages in large-scale reclamation work at features under its *de facto* control. As of Oct. 2014, **Fiery Cross Reef** has become the largest land feature in the Spratlys. (\*Taiwanese-controlled Itu Aba Island had been the largest.)

**Fully occupied in 1974**  
(US withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1973)

**Paracel Islands**

**Woody Island**



2,400m-class runway  
⇒ Extension work

**Scarborough Shoal**



Twin cannon



**Subi Reef**



EW Radar [est.]

12 Apr. 2015 (Ref.) Philippine Armed Forces  
Massive reclamation  
Enough space for building a 2<sup>nd</sup> runway

**Gaven Reefs**



15 Nov. 2014 (Ref.) CSIS/AMTI

Reclamation completed  
Infrastructure being built

**Hughes Reef**



24 Jan. 2015 (Ref.) IHS Jane's

Reclamation completed  
Infrastructure being built

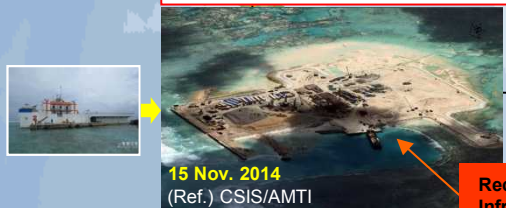
**Fiery Cross Reef**



Runway and apron construction underway

Mar. 23. 2015 (Ref.) IHS Jane's

**Quartern Reef**



15 Nov. 2014 (Ref.) CSIS/AMTI

Reclamation completed  
Infrastructure being built

**Johnson South Reef**



4 Mar. 2015

29 Jul. 2014

28 Feb. 2013 (Ref.) Philippine Armed Forces

Reclamation completed  
Infrastructure being built

**Spratly Islands**

**"Nine-dash line"**

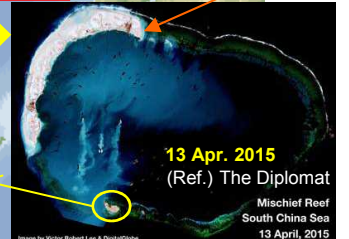
**6 features are occupied in 1988**  
(except Mischief Reef)  
(Decrease in Soviet Presence in Vietnam in 1980s)

**Mischief Reef**



19 Jan. 2015 (Ref.) CSIS/AMTI

Massive reclamation



13 Apr. 2015 (Ref.) The Diplomat

Mischief Reef  
South China Sea  
13 April, 2015

**Occupied in 1995**  
(US withdrawal from the Philippines in 1992)

Indonesia

Malaysia

0 500 1,000km

(Ref.) Various press reports etc. ※CSIS/AMTI = CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe

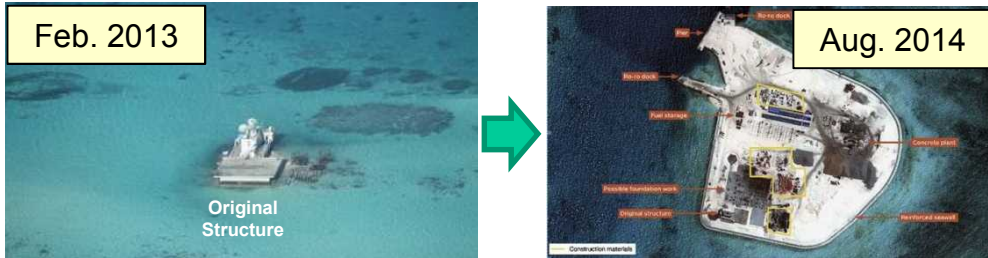




# 3-1 China's Reclamation Activities in SCS

(Ref.) CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe (※), IHS Jane's, Various press reports etc.

## Johnson South Reef



## Hughes Reef



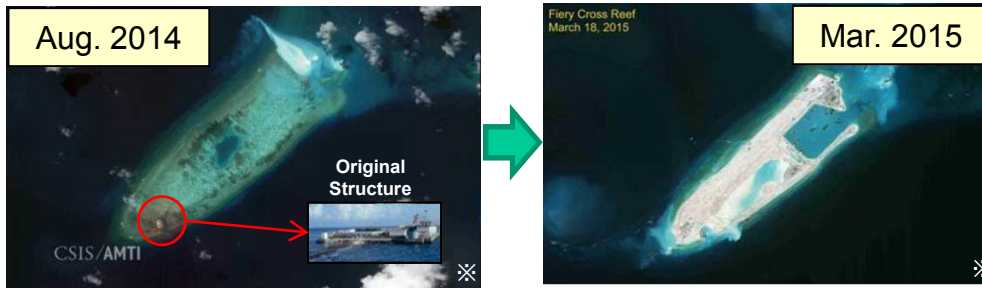
## Cuarteron Reef



## Gaven Reefs



## Fiery Cross Reef



## Subi Reef



## Mischief Reef



**US DoD "Annual Report to Congress – Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC 2015"** (May 8, 2015)

"As of late December 2014, China had reclaimed about 500 acres (= 2km<sup>2</sup>) of land as part of this effort. ... Although it is unclear what will ultimately be built on these expanded outposts, they could include harbors, communications and surveillance systems, logistics support, and at least one airfield." (\* A DoD official said that China had reclaimed approx. 2,000 acres (= 8km<sup>2</sup>) of land in the SCS on the day of publication.)

On March 31, 2015, then U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander expressed concern describing China's reclamation in the SCS as **"Great Wall of Sand"**.

On April 9, 2015, the China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson said: "After the construction, the islands and reefs will be able to provide ... services to meet various civilian demands **satisfying the need of necessary military defense**".

On April 21, 2015, the Philippines Chief of Staff said that the reclamation "will **cause tensions** ... due to its **possible military purposes**".

⇒ Various press reports pointed out the **possibility of militarization of these reclaimed features** based on satellite images and/or quoting statements above.



## 3-2 China's Reclamation Activities in SCS (for each feature)

### Johnson South Reef

February 2013



(Ref.) Philippine Armed Forces

February 2014



(Ref.) Philippine Armed Forces

August 2014



(Ref.) IHS Jane's





### 3-3 China's Reclamation Activities in SCS (for each feature)

#### Hughes Reef

2013



(Ref.) Various Info.

January 2015



(Ref.) IHS Jane's



## 3-4 China's Reclamation Activities in SCS (for each feature)

### Cuarteron Reef

March 2013



(Ref.) Various Info.

November 2014



(Ref.) CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe