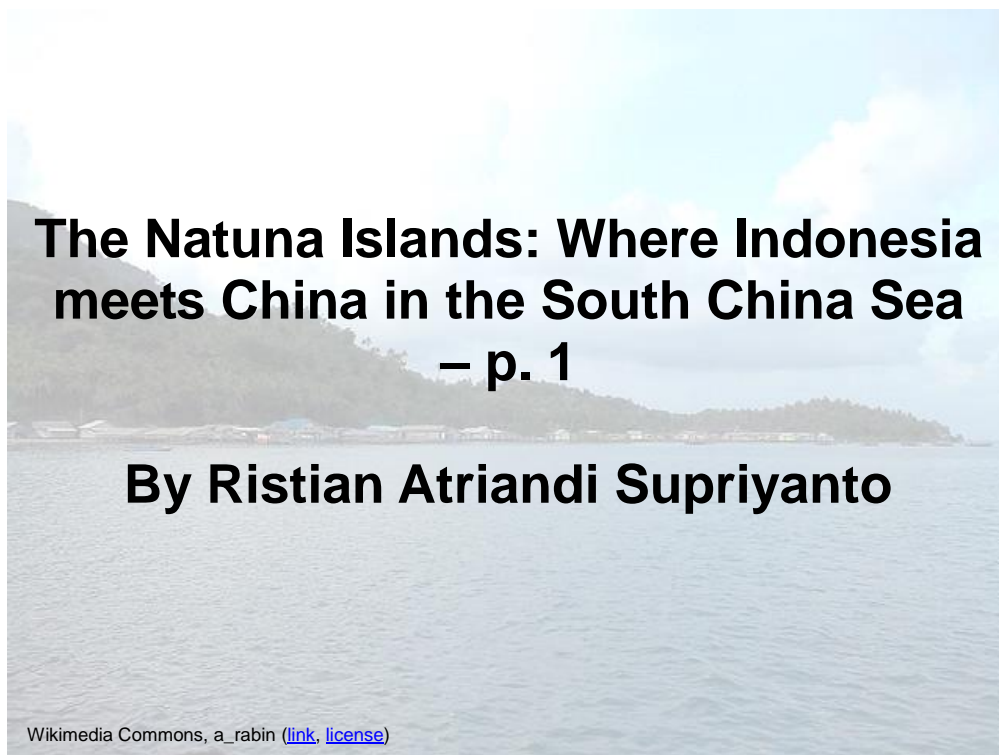


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MSP PERSPECTIVES



The Natuna Islands: Where Indonesia meets China in the South China Sea

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Due to their proximity to the disputed features in the South China Sea, Indonesia's Natuna Islands can possibly become yet another front of geopolitical competition in the area. With only 27 out of its 154 islands inhabited, the Natuna archipelago does not only form Indonesia's northernmost point in the South China Sea, but also constitutes its vulnerability. However, any effective security and military presence in the area will critically depend on local economic and infrastructure development.

A tyranny of distance

Located about midway between the two halves of Malaysia, the Natuna islands are spread across 262 thousand square kilometres of water, more than ten times of their total land size. This presents a geographical challenge, for a tyranny of maritime distance reigns amongst the islands in the Natuna archipelago itself; between the Natuna Islands and other islands within the Riau Islands Province (in which Natuna is a regency); as well as between the Natuna Islands and the seat of government in Jakarta, more than a thousand kilometres away to the south.

A tyranny of distance consequently becomes Indonesia's vulnerability in monitoring and controlling this northern frontier. There is no direct commercial flight between Jakarta and Ranai, the largest town in Natuna Besar Island, while daily commodities must be shipped distantly from Pontianak in West Kalimantan, or from Batam and Bintan Islands near Singapore. A lack of deep-water port prevents larger ships from calling at Ranai's piers, while smaller ships cannot take the risk to sail the rough seas during monsoon season.

Ironically, just a stone's throw away to its north, west, and east are countries that the Natunas can tap on to build trade networks and attract investments. But this seems difficult, since Jakarta can be suspicious about its frontier, with far-flung regions sharing a close affinity with neighbouring countries. The Natuna Islanders of around 76,000 people claim to share closer historical and cultural affinities to their Malay brethren in Malaysia than to Java.

Geopolitical epicentre

While Indonesia officially claims it is a non-claimant in the South China Sea disputes, the waters northeast of the Natuna Islands is where Indonesia's 200

nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) overlaps with China's 9-dash or U-shape line claim. As China's claim remains ill-defined, it is difficult to measure the actual size of the overlap.

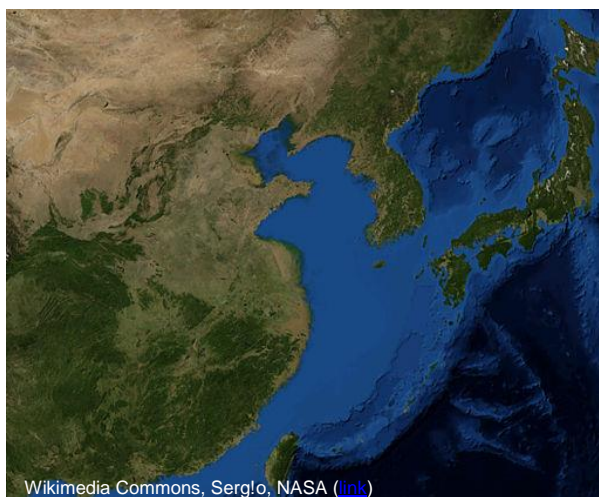
Contrary to reports of a build-up, Indonesia seems to as yet maintain a low military profile in the area. Naval presence is limited to small vessels inadequate to navigate the rough seas of Indonesia's EEZ, while no combat aircraft are permanently stationed at Ranai airport. Although military exercises have been conducted here since 1996, substantial military upgrades in Natuna itself appear challenging due to limited basing infrastructure and difficult access to operational necessities, such as fuel and spares for maintenance and repair.

Attracting foreign investment, especially Chinese, can play into Indonesia's broader strategy in gaining recognition and respect of its territorial sovereignty, while compensating for its lack of military strength. Despite Natuna's lack of infrastructure, foreign investment has somewhat trickled in, with three Chinese companies reportedly evincing interest in the local seafood industry. Such arrangements can become more apparent, supported by Jakarta's open embrace of Beijing's "Maritime Silk Road" to help build the former maritime vision.

However, this can potentially send a wrong signal to Beijing. Indonesia might give the impression that it has nothing to worry regarding China's ambitions in the South China Sea. With reclamation works underway in nearby Chinese-occupied features, the Natuna Islands could easily fall under Beijing's air and naval superiority. Airstrips in the Fiery Cross or Johnson South Reef could place Chinese frontline strike fighters much closer to Indonesia and make it more possible for China's air defence identification zone to be enforced over some parts of Natuna. The reclaimed features could also become a staging base for Chinese long-distance fishermen, and their armed escorts, to operate within Indonesia's EEZ. Hence, more encounters with Indonesian fishermen and patrol vessels are possible.

With the above challenges in mind, Indonesia should act immediately on its serious intent to develop the Natuna Islands. It can begin simply by building a power plant sufficient to meet growing local demand, while everything else can follow.

NAVAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY



JAPAN—CHINA | 14 JANUARY | THE GUARDIAN

Japan reveals record defence budget as tensions with China grow

Japan has announced its biggest ever defence budget in response to China's increasing military influence in the region and Beijing's claims to a group of disputed islands administered by Tokyo. The 4.98 trillion yen (US\$ 42bn) budget approved by the cabinet on Wednesday is up 2% from last year and marks the third straight increase after more than a decade of cuts.

[Full Report](#)

RUSSIA | 6 JANUARY | RADIO FREE EUROPE

Putin decree enables foreigners to serve in Russian military

Russian President Vladimir Putin has issued a decree enabling foreign nationals to serve in the Russian military. The January 2 decree allows foreigners aged 18-30 to sign up for five-year service contracts with the Russian armed forces, Interior Ministry troops, or the state firefighting service.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 8 JANUARY | DEFENSE NEWS

China's DDGs set to outnumber neighbors'

China's Navy will outnumber the largest competitor in the region — Japan — in the number of phased-array radar-equipped destroyers in 2018, if production continues on schedule. On Dec. 22, China commissioned its fifth 052C destroyer, the Jinan, leaving one last ship of that type to be finished.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 8 JANUARY | BLOOMBERG

Navy's fixes won't much help littoral ship, U.S. tester says

The upgrades to the Littoral Combat Ship approved by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel won't make it significantly less vulnerable to battle damage, according to the Pentagon's top weapons tester. "Notwithstanding reductions to its susceptibility" compared with the design of the first 32 ships, "the minor modifications to the LCS will not yield a ship that is significantly more survivable," Michael Gilmore, the Pentagon's director of operational testing, said in an e-mailed statement.

[Full Report](#)

PHILIPPINES—VIETNAM | 10 JANUARY | FOX NEWS (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Philippines, Vietnam condemn China's new fishing law

The Philippines and Vietnam have condemned China's new law that requires foreign fishermen to seek Beijing's approval to operate in much of the South China Sea, where overlapping territorial claims have increased tensions.

[Full Report](#)

RUSSIA | 10 JANUARY | DEFENSE NEWS

Russia overhauls military doctrine

Russia's new military doctrine calls for a more aggressive stance toward NATO, boosting presence in the Arctic and strengthening cooperation with India and China. "Global developments at present stage are characterized by an increasing global competition, tensions in various interstate and interregional areas," said the document, signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Dec. 26.

[Full Report](#)

S. KOREA—UNITED STATES | 12 JANUARY | YONHAP

S. Korea, U.S. to conduct joint naval drill this week

South Korea and the United States plan to carry out a two-day joint naval drill this week on South Korea's east coast as part of efforts to enhance their joint military readiness, officers here said Monday. The allies "are scheduled to conduct the exercise for two days starting Tuesday in the East Sea," a naval officer here said, requesting anonymity.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA—JAPAN | 12 JANUARY | JAPAN TIMES (KYODO)

Japan, China resume talks on maritime crisis management mechanism

Japan and China resumed talks Monday on launching a maritime crisis management mechanism by the end of this year, as both countries aim to avert unwanted clashes over the Senkaku Islands. The working-level talks in Tokyo, held for the first time since 2012, came after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Xi Jinping agreed during a summit in November to ease tensions over the sovereignty of the uninhabited islets in the East China Sea.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 13 JANUARY | REUTERS

U.S. Navy surface chief calls for more offensive weapons on ships

The U.S. Navy's surface forces commander on Tuesday called for putting more offensive weapons on a broader range of U.S. ships given escalating threats and concerns in the Asian-Pacific region. Vice Admiral Thomas Rowden told a Surface Navy Association national symposium in Crystal City, Virginia, that the Navy's test firing of a Norwegian missile off a Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) last year was a significant step toward showing that other smaller U.S. warships could be outfitted with offensive weapons.

[Full Report](#)

RUSSIA | 14 JANUARY | TASS

Russian Navy gets new-generation intelligence ship

The first Project-18280 intelligence ship Yury Ivanov has been signed over to the Russian Navy, spokesman for the St. Petersburg-based Severnaya Verf shipyard told TASS on Wednesday. "The vessel has already been signed over to the Navy - the acceptance act was signed at the end of last year," the shipyard source said.

[Full Report](#)



Wikimedia Commons, Robert A. Wood Sr., U.S. Navy ([link](#))

UNITED STATES | 15 JANUARY | REUTERS

U.S. Navy renaming new coastal combat ships 'frigates'

U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus on Thursday said the Navy would rename the modified Littoral Combat Ships it plans to build as frigates, given their enhanced capabilities. "One of the requirements of the Small Surface Combatant Task Force was to have a ship with frigate-like capabilities.

[Full Report](#)

TAIWAN | 22 JANUARY | IHS JANE'S 360

Taiwan commissions 20,000-tonne combat support ship

The Republic of China Navy (RoCN) took delivery on 23 January of a newly completed fast combat support ship. *Panshih* was built by state-owned Kaohsiung-based shipbuilder CSBC Corporation at a cost of USD130 million. Construction began in 2011 and the ship was launched in 2013.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA—PHILIPPINES | 26 JANUARY | IHS JANE'S 360

PT PAL cuts steel on first Philippine Navy sealift vessel

Indonesian state-owned shipbuilder PT PAL has begun building the first of two strategic sealift vessels (SSVs) on order for the Philippine Navy (PN), a company executive confirmed to *IHS Jane's* on 26 January. A steel-cutting ceremony was held at the company's premises in Surabaya on 22 January.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 27 JANUARY | IHS JANE'S 360

Malaysia mulls air defences for submarine base near South China Sea

Malaysia is looking to equip its naval base at Teluk Sepanggar with an air defence system as a pre-emptive measure against potential threats, said Defence Minister Hishammuddin Tun Hussein in a media statement on 26 January. The base, now known as RMN Kota Kinabalu, is currently home to the Royal Malaysian Navy's (RMN's) two Scorpene-class diesel-electric attack submarines: KD Tunku Abdul Rahman and KD Tun Razak .

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA—PHILIPPINES | 29 JANUARY | RAPPLER

Australia's gift to Philippine Navy: 2 supply ships

Australia has donated to the Philippine Navy two recently decommissioned Landing Craft Heavy (LCH) or supply ships, Australian Defense Minister Kevin Andrews announced on Thursday, January 29. Former Royal Australian Navy vessels HMAS Tarakan and Brunei will be given to the Philippines already refurbished, equipped with new safety and navigation equipment, including spare parts.

[Full Report](#)

MARITIME SECURITY AND SAFETY



INDONESIA | 10 JANUARY | ANTARA NEWS

Indonesia committed towards eradicating illegal fishing

Indonesia remains committed to completely eradicating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in its territorial waters. IUU fishing respects neither national boundaries nor international attempts to manage fishing in the high seas, and is a serious global problem that contributes to overfishing, creates unfair competition, and impedes sustainable fisheries.

[Full Report](#)

PAKISTAN—INDIA | 2 JANUARY | JAPAN TIMES (REUTERS)

Pakistani boat laden with explosives blows up off Indian coast

A Pakistani fishing boat laden with explosives bound for India blew up, killing all four people on board, after the Indian Coast Guard tried to stop and search it, the Indian government said on Friday. It was not possible to independently verify the Indian account. In a first reaction, Pakistan's foreign ministry said it was unclear whether the incident had happened at all.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 2 JANUARY | SEATRADE GLOBAL

IMO sec-gen Sekimizu calls for action on passenger ferry safety

IMO secretary-general Koji Sekimizu says action must be taken to improve the safety standards on passenger ferries following the fatal fire on the Norman Atlantic. In a message posted on the IMO's Facebook page Sekimizu said: "2014 will be remembered as another year of very serious maritime casualties involving passenger ships, with the tragedy of Sewol and the fire aboard the Norman Atlantic."

[Full Report](#)

SINGAPORE | 2 JANUARY | IHS MARITIME 360

Ships collide near Horsburgh Lighthouse, Singapore

A Libyan-flagged oil tanker has collided with a Singapore-flagged bulk carrier off Horsburgh Lighthouse, located on the Singaporean island of Pedra Branca at 0600 hours local time on 2 January 2015. The 116,039 dwt tanker Alyarmouk sustained damage to one of her cargo tanks, resulting in the spillage of some crude oil in the area, which is around 10 n miles north-east of Horsburgh Lighthouse.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 12 JANUARY | ICC-CCS

SE Asia tanker hijacks rose in 2014 despite global drop in sea piracy: IMB

Attacks against small tankers off South East Asia's coasts caused a rise in global ship hijackings, up to 21 in 2014 from 12 in 2013, despite piracy at sea falling to its lowest level in eight years, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has revealed.

[Full Report](#)



INDONESIA—MALAYSIA | 27 JANUARY | ASIAONE (THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK)

Indonesia and Malaysia to discuss maritime issues

Malaysia and Indonesia are to discuss maritime issues, including the detention of Malaysian fishing vessels as well as their common sea borders. Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, who earlier met his Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi, said the two countries would continue to sort these issues through existing mechanisms.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 14 JANUARY | SEATRADE GLOBAL

Put pressure on pirate breeding grounds, says UK Chamber

The UK Chamber of Shipping has warned that despite the fall in Somali piracy, violent "petro-piracy" remains a threat to shipping in West Africa and South East Asia. The call comes in the wake of International Maritime Bureau (IMB) statistics that show a significant drop in Somali piracy, owing to a multinational military deployment, the use of private maritime security and implementation of Best Management Practice 4 (BMP4).

[Full Report](#)

SINGAPORE | 19 JANUARY | SEATRADE GLOBAL

Singapore reaffirms maritime safety stance following recent incidents

The Singapore authorities have reiterated need to focus on maritime safety following recent incidents. "On the operational front, recent incidents reinforce the need for us to pay close attention to maritime safety," Lui Tuck Yew, Singapore Minister of Transport said at the Singapore Maritime Foundation's 2015 New Year reception on Friday.

[Full Report](#)

NEW ZEALAND | 20 JANUARY | NEW ZEALAND HERALD

Navy fires back at critics over illegal fishing standoff in Southern Ocean

The commanding officer of the navy ship that was outlasted by three ageing fishing vessels in the Southern Ocean has responded to critics who labelled the operation a public relations disaster. HMNZS Wellington docked in Dunedin yesterday to refuel after eight weeks patrolling the seas around Antarctica.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 27 JANUARY | DEUTSCHE WELLE

Indonesia calls off AirAsia crash search

All efforts to raise the wreck of crashed AirAsia flight QZ8501 have been halted indefinitely, Indonesia's military announced on Tuesday. "The operation has been ongoing for 30 days so the joint team has been pulled out," Rear Admiral Widodo, a naval officer managing the search and rescue operation, said. "We apologize to the families of the victims. We tried our best to look for the missing victims," said Widodo.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA | 28 JANUARY | THE GUARDIAN

Detention of 157 Tamil asylum seekers on board ship ruled lawful

The high court has ruled that the detention of 157 Tamil asylum seekers at sea for a month was lawful. The 157 Tamil asylum seekers, who fled Sri Lanka via India, were intercepted by the Australian customs vessel Ocean Protector in June. They were held at sea, with only limited communication and without being told where they were going, for a month while Australia tried to return them to India.

[Full Report](#)

GLOBAL | 28 JANUARY | ALL AFRICA (THE GUARDIAN)

IMO updates sea guide for rescue of refugees, migrants

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has issued the updated and revised Rescue at Sea guide intended for the rescue of refugees and migrants. According to IMO, the guide, was prepared in collaboration with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 30 JANUARY | ICC-CCS

Malaysian authorities recover hijacked tanker and arrest pirates

A hijacked Malaysian coastal tanker has been recovered by the prompt actions of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) off the coast of Malaysia. The owners of the Malaysian tanker lost contact with the tanker at 2200 hours on 28 January 2015. The tanker, with ten crew members on board and carrying 700 metric tonnes of marine fuel oil was off Tanjung Ayam at the Southern entrance to the South China Sea.

[Full Report](#)

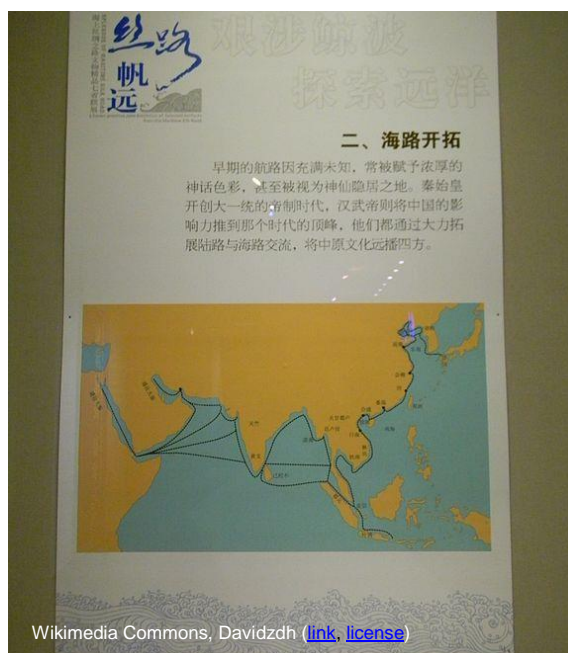
UNITED STATES | 30 JANUARY | MILITARY.COM
(HONOLULU STAR)

Coast Guard's virtual wargame targets Honolulu harbor

Aiming to pre-empt a cyberattack that could cripple shipping traffic to Hawaii, the major players in the port of Honolulu joined in a first-of-its-kind exercise Wednesday to examine weaknesses in their computer networks. The Coast Guard-sponsored event saw maritime industry computer professionals working to fend off a virtual large-scale coordinated cyberattack at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

[Full Report](#)

SHIPPING, PORTS AND THE MARITIME ECONOMY



MALAYSIA—CHINA | 27 JANUARY | THE STAR

Full backing for Maritime Silk Road

Malaysia fully supports the concept of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiated by China, said Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai. “We have identified a few ports in Malaysia to be part of the MSR,” he said after leading a Malaysian delegation to two separate meetings with the Chinese Transport Ministry and Foreign Affairs Ministry here yesterday.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN | 5 JANUARY | MARITIME EXECUTIVE

Japanese shipbuilders benefiting from Abenomics in 2015

The new years’ messages from Japan’s shipbuilding industry point the positive effects of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Abenomics. The Japanese stock market has returned to levels not seen since the Lehman Shock and currency markets are on a continued trend of yen depreciation.

[Full Report](#)

ports during the period 2015-2019 reaches Rp 34 trillion, which will be covered by the company’s internal funds, bank loans and bonds,” Pelindo I president director Bambang Eko Cahyono said as quoted by Antara news agency at the firm’s office in Jakarta on Wednesday.

[Full Report](#)

SRI LANKA—CHINA | 16 JANUARY | REUTERS

Sri Lanka to review China port deal amid security concerns

Sri Lanka’s new government on Friday said it will review a \$1.5 billion port deal with China Communications Construction Co Ltd over concerns about the Chinese company getting land on a freehold basis in a high security zone. Sri Lanka’s neighbour India has also raised security concerns over the project as a large portion of cargoes bound for India are transhipped through Colombo port.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 14 JANUARY | JAKARTA POST

Pelindo I allocates Rp 34t to support maritime highway

State-owned port operator PT Pelindo I (Persero) says it has invested Rp 34 trillion (US\$2.69 billion) to develop ports in order to support the maritime-highway construction program initiated by President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo. “The total amount of investment needed to carry out the construction of

JAPAN—AUSTRALIA | 16 JANUARY | WORLD MARITIME NEWS

JAPEA enters into force

The Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAPEA) entered into force on 15 January 2015. On 8 July 2014 Prime Minister Abbott and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe signed the agreement during an official ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra.

[Full Report](#)

PHILIPPINES | 19 JANUARY | PHILIPPINE STAR

Port congestion seen to ease after Pope's visit

Congestion at Manila's ports is seen to ease after the five-day visit of Pope Francis, a cabinet official said. Trade Secretary Gregory Domingo told reporters that while the situation in the ports is expected to be affected by the visit of the Pope, improvements are seen for next week.

[Full Report](#)



Wikimedia Commons. Tibor Végh. [link](#), [license](#)

CHINA | 20 JANUARY | WORLD MARITIME NEWS

Shanghai keeps lead as world's busiest container port

China's Port of Shanghai has wrapped up the year with a new record in the number of handled containers reaching 35.2 million milestone, Bloomberg reports. Thus, the port managed to yet again surpass the volumes handled by its nearest box counterpart Singapore that amounted to 33.9 million.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 24 JANUARY | XINHUA

China's Silk Road strategy draws interest from over 50 countries

China's initiative to build the Silk Road economic belt and the 21st century maritime Silk Road has received interest from more than 50 countries, an official said Saturday. He Yafei, deputy head of the overseas

Chinese affairs office of the State Council, made the remarks at a conference in the southern-most island province of Hainan.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 26 JANUARY | MARITIME EXECUTIVE

Indonesia starts five port projects

Indonesia's state-owned port operator PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Pelindo 1) will start five port expansion projects this year. According to The Jakarta Post, the five ports involved are Malahayati Port, Belawan Port, Kuala Tanjung Port, Dumai Port and Batam Port.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH ASIA | 26 JANUARY | WORLD MARITIME NEWS

South Asia still preferred dumping ground

Out of a total of 1026 ships dismantled globally in 2014, 641, representing 74% of the total gross tonnage (GT) scrapped, were sold to substandard facilities in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh where ships are dismantled directly on tidal beaches, the NGO Shipbreaking Platform's demolition stats show.

[Full Report](#)

ASIA | 27 JANUARY | REUTERS

Tighter supertanker market may curb Asian fuel oil supplies

The window to sell Western fuel oil to Asia is starting to close as demand for a limited fleet of supertankers to store cheap crude pushes freight rates to multi-month highs, shipping and trade sources said. Crude prices have fallen nearly 60 percent since June and, with prices a year ahead already quoted about \$10 a barrel dearer than now, crude traders have hired up to 20 supertankers to store oil with a view to turning a big profit later.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA—MYANMAR | 28 JANUARY | REUTERS

Oil pipeline between China and Myanmar begins trial operation

China and Myanmar put into trial operation the Myanmar section of a shared crude oil pipeline on Wednesday, Chinese state media reported. The 771-km section of the 2,400-km (1,500-mile) pipeline was completed in May 2014, the state media said. A subsidiary of state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) built and manages it.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA—UNITED STATES | 28 JANUARY |
MARITIME EXECUTIVE

Modi and Obama talk up trade

Speaking during his visit to India this week, U.S. President Barack Obama said that over the next two years, the Export Import Bank will support the export of “Made in America” goods worth \$1 billion to India. “We’re advancing the vision that I laid out on my last visit: India and the United States as true global partners. And a core element of this vision is greater trade, investment and economic partnership.”

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA—SPAIN—ITALY | 28 JANUARY |
JAKARTA POST

Spain, Italy to strengthen maritime cooperation with RI

Spain and Italy have pledged to boost cooperation with Indonesia in the field of maritime infrastructure development and its related trade, after the ambassadors of both countries met with Coordinating Maritime Affairs Minister Indroyono Susilo in Jakarta.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA—TAIWAN | 30 JANUARY | ASIAONE (CHINA
POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK)

Beijing stresses ‘One Belt, One Road’ in Taipei

The seventh Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement Committee Meeting convened yesterday at The Grand Hotel, with Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Deputy Secretary-General Shih Hui-fen and Deputy Chairman of China’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait Zheng Lizhong serving as conveners for either side of the strait.

[Full Report](#)