



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Statement of the DND on the West Philippine Sea

The Department of National Defense reiterates its stand on the Philippines' "possession" and "position" in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), which has been the subject of much discussion and confusion lately after the President mentioned this during his 2019 State of the Nation Address.

While China may have an advantage in the South China Sea because of its existing structures built on artificial islands, which it has hardened and militarized, it is in position, and to a certain degree, has possession of only a very small part of the South China Sea.

In the same vein, the Philippines also has possession and position in the West Philippine Sea. We have to clarify, however, that possession, position, and control are different realities that do not necessarily exist together. Although several claimant countries are occupying features in the South China Sea, not one of them has complete and sole control over that entire body of water.

It must also be pointed out that the Philippines never gave up any of its positions in the WPS during the Duterte Administration and, in fact, it is improving the existing facilities of its biggest island, Pag-asa, to accommodate more residents and personnel.

Ultimately, the UNCLOS, ratified in 1982 by many countries including the Philippines and China, is the legal basis of the Philippines' claim of sovereign rights over its EEZ. This was further affirmed by the PCA award to the Philippines in 2016, which invalidated China's so-called historical claim delineated by its Nine-Dash Line. Thus, the Philippines has two documents to support its claims versus none for the Chinese. Thus, the Chinese presence in the WPS is akin to somebody squatting on a piece of land owned by someone else.

We are ready to defend our sovereignty and sovereign rights using whatever means available to us. Likewise, every able-bodied Filipino should be ready to fulfill his or her duty when the time comes.

- Dir. Arsenio R. Andolong  
Spokesperson, Department of National Defense

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