



Huayang Biweekly Brief

The South China Sea and China

Volume 1, Issue 3 (2026)

SEPTEMBER 2

PLA Southern Theater Command Maintains Combat Readiness Patrols around Huangyan Dao.

The PLA Southern Theater Command (STC) maintained combat readiness patrols in the territorial sea and airspace of China's Huangyan Dao and surrounding areas in early September. According to China's Ministry of National Defense, theater command forces had strengthened readiness patrols since August in response to rights-violation and provocative activities. The statement said the patrols were aimed at safeguarding China's sovereignty and security and maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea.

SEPTEMBER 3

China Responds to Vietnam's Remarks on the Xisha Qundao.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun responded to a question regarding Vietnam's remarks claiming sovereignty over the Xisha Qundao and opposing foreign activities in the area, including at Lingyang Jiao and Yagong Dao, without Vietnam's permission. Guo stated that the Xisha Qundao is China's inherent territory and that there is no dispute over it. He added that it is within China's sovereign rights to conduct necessary construction on its own territory, and that there is no room for unwarranted accusations from Vietnam.

Sansha TV Releases *Fengshang Booklist* Episode on *History and Facts of the South China Sea*.

Sansha TV released an episode of its *Fengshang Booklist* program focusing on *History and Facts of the South China Sea*. Edited by Dr. Wu Shicun, chairman of the Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance, *History and Facts of the South China Sea* is a comprehensive work on South China Sea history and related issues. The program described the book as a major work that helps fill gaps in Chinese historical research on the South China Sea, particularly in the collection and analysis of historical materials and the development of a theoretical framework. It also noted that the book provides historical and legal support for China's broader participation in global ocean governance.

Key Takeaways

- China reaffirmed its sovereignty over the Xisha Qundao and reiterated its position on the South China Sea arbitration in response to Vietnamese and Philippine remarks, respectively.
- Regional maritime cooperation advanced through the China-Singapore joint naval exercise, the HACGAM coast guard meeting and continued COC consultations under the JWG-DOC framework.
- China reported progress in deep-sea geological research, AUV operations and saturation diving in the South China Sea.
- Sansha continued ecological conservation and public communication efforts, including green turtle protection and outreach on South China Sea history.



Wu Shicun, ed., *History and Facts of the South China Sea*, Zhejiang Education Publishing House and Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 2026. Photo credit: Sansha TV Official Weibo.



The High-Level Meeting of the 22nd Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting provided a pan-Asia-Pacific platform for coast guard and maritime law-enforcement cooperation. As the host, the CCG sought to work with all parties to advance regional and global ocean governance, jointly address maritime risks and challenges, and promote the building of a maritime community with a shared future. It offered a platform for exchanges on maritime law-enforcement, search and rescue, environmental protection and capacity building. It also allowed China to present its maritime governance experience, including law-enforcement activities in the South China Sea within a cooperative regional framework. Photo credit: China Military Online.

SEPTEMBER 5

China and Singapore Hold “Maritime Cooperation-2026” Joint Exercise near Zhanjiang.

China-Singapore “Maritime Cooperation-2026” joint exercise opened at a naval port in Zhanjiang, China. China sent the guided-missile frigate *Dali*, while Singapore sent the frigate *RSS Steadfast*. The exercise included live-fire shooting, maritime replenishment and joint search-and-rescue drills, aiming to enhance mutual trust, promote practical cooperation and improve the two sides’ ability to jointly maintain regional peace and stability. The exercise concluded on September 9 after all scheduled drills were completed.

SEPTEMBER 7

China Responds to Philippine Defense Secretary’s Remarks Linking Reduced U.S.-South Korean Military Exercises to Chinese Influence.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning responded to remarks by Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., who said that China could use recently scaled-down U.S.-South Korean military exercises as an opportunity to assert itself in the Indo-Pacific region. Mao stated that China remains committed to maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and does not engage in major-country confrontation.

China Coast Guard Hosts Asian Coast Guard High-Level Meeting in Hangzhou.

From September 7 to 10, the China Coast Guard (CCG) hosted the High-Level Meeting of the 22nd Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM) in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. The meeting focused on regional maritime security, maritime search and rescue, marine environmental protection, information sharing and law-enforcement capacity building. At the opening ceremony, the CCG screened an English-language promotional video, *Enforcing Law at Sea*, which featured the CCG’s participation in rescue operations involving crew members and fishermen from countries including South Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines.

SEPTEMBER 8

GMGS Completes Ultra-Deepwater AUV Search Mission in the South China Sea.

The Guangzhou Marine Geological Survey (GMGS) autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) technical team successfully completed an ultra-deepwater search mission in the central South China Sea basin at depths exceeding 4,000 meters. The team precisely located and recovered lost seabed scientific equipment, marking a new breakthrough in the application of AUV-based acoustic-optical collaborative detection technology. The AUV completed a full-area sonar sweep of over 60 km² at 40-60 m above the seafloor.

Using echo intensity and signal characteristics, it rapidly screened seabed anomalies and classified potential targets as primary or secondary priorities for further investigation. The successful implementation of this mission further verified the operational capability of GMGS's deep-sea unmanned intelligent equipment in complex ultra-deepwater environments.

SEPTEMBER 9

A PLAN Detachment Achieves Breakthrough in Deep Saturation Diving.

A naval rescue and salvage detachment of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) recently completed deep saturation diving training in a designated area of the South China Sea. The training aimed to establish scientific, practical, and safe saturation diving operating procedures, test combat capabilities in command, technical operations, and support, and pave the way for the operational application of deep saturation diving. Four divers confronted the challenges of high deep-sea pressure, effectively handled various situations during training, achieved a maximum excursion depth of over 300 meters and produced six significant training results.

China Reiterates Its Position on the “South China Sea Arbitration”.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning responded to remarks by Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. concerning China's position on the South China Sea. According to the question raised at the regular press conference, Teodoro criticized what he called China's violation of UNCLOS and “coercion, bullying and aggression” after being handed a piece of paper stating China's position on the South China Sea at an international forum. Mao said she was not sure what exactly had happened at the event but stressed that China's position has always been clear on the so-called “South China Sea Arbitration”. She said that the Philippines' unilateral initiation of the case was a distortion and abuse of the dispute settlement mechanism under the UNCLOS. She urged the certain individual of the Philippine side to cut the provocations and theatrics and stop undermining China-Philippines relations and stability in the South China Sea.

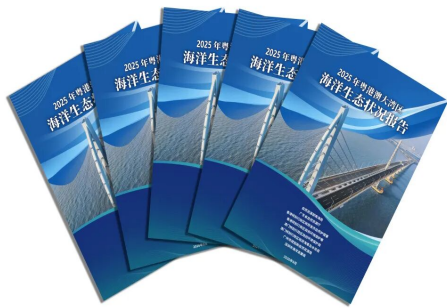
SEPTEMBER 10

Green Turtle Protection in the South China Sea Makes Significant Progress.

The Sansha Bei Dao Sea Turtle Rescue and Conservation Center conducted pre-release training for two recently rescued juvenile green turtles, helping them develop the skills needed to survive independently before being released back into the sea. Bei Dao, covering only 0.4 km², is China's largest natural nesting ground for green sea turtles.



Juvenile green turtles at the Sansha Bei Dao Sea Turtle Rescue and Conservation Center. Before release, the juvenile green turtles must acclimate to natural water temperatures in temporary seawater holding tanks and regain their ability to swim and forage independently. The sea turtles are then transferred to pools that simulate their natural habitat to practice evading predators and identifying natural food sources. Finally, after health assessments, they are released back into the sea. Photo credit: Xinhua.



The 2025 Report on the Marine Ecological Status of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The report shows that marine ecological protection in the GBA achieved notable results in 2025, with overall marine ecological conditions remaining stable and continuing to improve. Monitored coral reef and mangrove ecosystems remained in good condition, and habitats of rare marine species such as the Chinese white dolphin, as well as migratory bird flyways, were effectively protected. Photo credit: hinews.

By early September 2026, Sansha City had marked 187 nests for protection and rescued 198 sea turtles since the start of the year. Conservation centers, patrols by fishermen, and AI technology together provide round-the-clock protection for sea turtles.

China and ASEAN Countries Advance COC Consultations at the 58th JWG-DOC Meeting.

From September 10 to 11, China and ten ASEAN parties held the 58th meeting of the Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea* (JWG-DOC) in Manila, the Philippines. The parties continued to advance consultations on the *Code of Conduct in the South China Sea* (COC). The meeting was co-chaired by Tan Qingsheng, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Adina Kamarudin, Director-General of the Department of Maritime Affairs of Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

SEPTEMBER 11

Report Shows Marine Ecological Conditions Stable and Improving in GBA along the Northern Coast of the South China Sea.

The South China Sea Bureau under the Ministry of Natural Resources released the *2025 Report on the Marine Ecological Status of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area* at the 2026 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Marine Cooperation and Development Forum held in Guangzhou. The report shows that the marine ecological conditions in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) remained generally stable and continued to improve in 2025. Various ecological protection and restoration measures were solidly implemented, and efforts to build a Beautiful China were yielding tangible results in coastal areas.

SEPTEMBER 15

China Rejects Philippine DFA Remarks on Meiji Jiao and Zhubi Jiao.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun responded to a question concerning a September 11 statement by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs on Meiji Jiao and Zhubi Jiao. The Philippine side claimed sovereign rights and jurisdiction over Meiji Jiao and Zhubi Jiao as low-tide elevations (LTEs) within its exclusive economic zone and continental shelf and later claimed sovereignty over Zhubi Jiao as an LTE within the territorial sea of Zhongye Dao. Guo said Nansha Qundao, including Meiji Jiao, Zhubi Jiao and Zhongye Dao, is China's inherent territory, and that China's construction and other activities on its own territory are legitimate, lawful and an exercise of China's sovereignty. He reiterated that the so-called "South China Sea arbitration award" is illegal, null and void, and has no binding force, and that the Philippines' so-called "Maritime Zones Act" gravely violates China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. Expressing China's firm opposition to and rejection of the Act, he urged the Philippines to stop infringing upon China's rights, engaging in provocations and staging publicity stunts.

Wang Yi and ASEAN Secretary-General Discuss South China Sea Cooperation.

Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister, met with ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn in Beijing. During the meeting, Wang said maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea serves the common interests of regional countries and that China is ready to work with ASEAN countries to implement the DOC, advance COC consultations, and jointly build a new narrative of peace, stability, cooperation and friendship in the South China Sea. Kao said the South China Sea issue should not become an obstacle to ASEAN-China relations, and that ASEAN is willing to work with China to jointly maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.



Wang Yi met with ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn in Beijing. Both sides stressed that maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea serves the common interests of regional countries, and would work together to build a peaceful, stable, cooperative and friendly South China Sea. Photo Credit: MFA, China.

Editor-in-Chief	Wu Shicun
Editors	Chen Wangwanyu Zhang Anqi Li Dongte
Reviewers	Xu Xiaodong Qin Kai



華陽海洋研究中心

Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance

About Huayang Center

The Huayang Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance (Huayang Center) is a comprehensive maritime policy research institution dedicated to promoting the peaceful use and sustainable development of the oceans. It engages in interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral research on maritime issues. Huayang Center is chaired by Wu Shicun, Founding President of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies (NISCSS) and Chairman of the Academic Committee of NISCSS. Headquartered in Sanya, Huayang Center also operates an office in Jiangdong New District in Haikou, with a liaison office in Beijing, and a branch-Huayang Center for Yellow Sea Studies-in Yancheng City, Jiangsu Province.

The Huayang Center is committed to the mission of advancing global ocean governance and sustainable development, contributing to China's goal of becoming a maritime power, and supporting Hainan's "ocean-oriented development" strategy. Focusing on the implementation of national maritime strategies, marine conservation and sustainable use, the maintenance of peace and stability in the South China Sea, and the promotion of international maritime cooperation and public diplomacy, Huayang Center is committed to the long-term goal of building a world-class think tank. It undertakes interdisciplinary research, policy advisory, professional training, international exchanges, and provides consulting services to maritime-related institutions and enterprises.

The Huayang Center's research team brings together leading experts and scholars from both China and abroad in the fields of international relations, international law, regional security, marine science, environmental protection, marine biology, and energy & resources. Led by Chairman and Chief Expert Dr. Wu Shicun, the Huayang Center's research team is distinguished by its youthfulness, international outlook, multidisciplinary expertise, and cross-sectoral approach.

The Huayang Center upholds the core values of "talent aggregation, results-oriented and innovation-driven development." Guided by the founding mission of building a "small team, big network-rooted in Hainan, serving the nation, engaging the world," the Huayang Center adheres to the philosophy of "attracting talent through meaningful work, advancing development through research, and overcoming challenges through focused efforts." Since its establishment, the Huayang Center has launched a series of signature initiatives-including the Huayang Exhibition, Huayang Briefing, Huayang Talk, Huayang Report, Huayang Team, and Huayang Culture-that have earned widespread recognition and acclaim from relevant decision-making bodies and peers in the field.

CONTACT US

Address: 2006-2007A, 2nd Floor, Hainan Hongbao Investment Headquarters, No.6 Huanhai Road, Jiangdong New Area, Haikou, Hainan, P.R. China

www.huayangmaritime.com

info@huayangocean.com

Tel: +86-0898-65969576

