



USINDOPACOM Legal Vigilance Update

Issue #53, 30 October 2025

PREVAIL

Teammates,

Below please find the 53rd edition of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) Legal Vigilance Update (LVU). To access previous LVUs, please visit <https://www.pacom.mil/Contact/Directory/Jo/Jo6-Staff-Judge-Advocate/>.

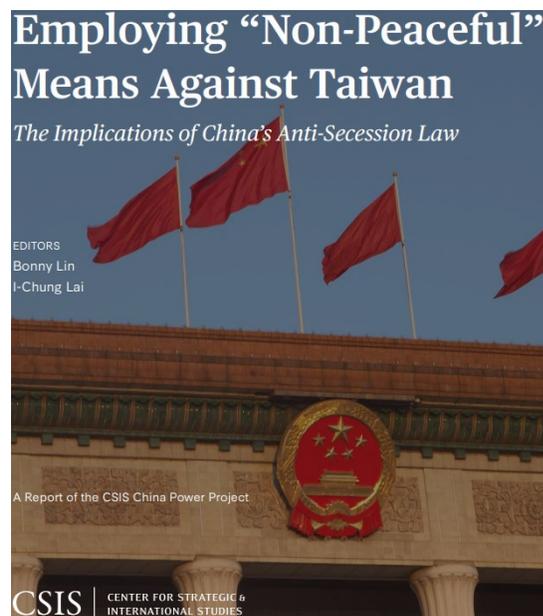
Quote of the Week:

China's persistent use of maritime gray zone tactics poses a fundamental challenge to regional stability and the international order. These actions are designed to achieve strategic aims – territorial advancement and sovereignty erosion – without crossing the threshold of conventional armed conflict. Using ambiguity and indirect coercion, China seeks to “advance without attacking” and shape a favorable strategic environment under the guise of civilian activity...The integrity of the maritime domain hinges on a coordinated, transparent, and resolute response to these deceptive and persistent gray zone tactics.

Lin Chauluen

[Confronting China's pervasive maritime gray zone campaign](#)
SpaceNews, October 30, 2025

- **28 October 2025:** China escalates coercive campaign against Taiwan with investigation targeting Taiwanese legislator.
 - **Bottom-line:** according to reports, the Chongqing Municipal Public Security Bureau in southwestern China launched an investigation into Taiwanese legislator Puma Shen, marking ***Beijing's latest coercive and intimidating move targeting individuals it deems to be “diehard Taiwan separatists.”***
 - **References:**
 - [Yuanyue Dang, 'Diehard' Taiwanese lawmaker is formally investigated by mainland Chinese police \(South China Morning Post, Oct. 28, 2025\)](#)
 - **Key Points:**
 - Shen is a lawmaker for Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party and serves on the Taiwanese legislature's Procedure Committee as well as its Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee, researching disinformation campaigns.
 - The Chongqing Municipal Public Security Bureau in southwestern China said it had launched an investigation into Shen's “alleged crime of secession,” citing China's June 2024 legal opinion which targets “diehard Taiwan separatists” and threatens trials in absentia.
 - [China's June 2024 legal opinion is a coercive and intimidating expansion of on its Anti-Secession Law](#) – the 2005 measure that threatens China's unification with Taiwan through “non-peaceful means” if necessary.



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- **China's 2005 Anti-Secession Law and the June 2024 opinion are attempts to influence and intervene in Taiwan's democracy through intimidation and coercion.**
- As the [Australian Strategic Policy Institute wrote in July 2025](#):
“This shows the extent of Beijing's evolving lawfare strategy — the use of legal tools and judicial theater to achieve political ends. Lawfare is now a domain of coercion for Beijing against Taiwan — one where tactics are carried out through courtrooms and clauses. **The aim is clear: to isolate, intimidate, and delegitimize Taiwan's leadership under the guise of legal process.**”
- **28 October 2025:** President Marcos' ASEAN Summit statement on the South China Sea.
 - **Bottom-line:** Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. condemned China's destabilizing actions in the South China Sea during his address at the ASEAN summit, emphasizing the importance of upholding international law, particularly the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling, and reiterated the need for regional cooperation to safeguard maritime peace and stability.
 - **References:**
 - [Cristina Chi, Without naming China, Marcos slams Scarborough 'nature reserve' \(PhilStar, Oct. 27, 2025\)](#)
 - [Liz Lagniton, Marcos slams China's "dangerous maneuvers" in South China Sea at ASEAN Summit \(Maritime Fairtrade, Oct. 28, 2025\)](#)
 - **Key Points:**
 - **President Marcos expressed deep concern over dangerous maneuvers and coercive actions that interfere with legitimate Philippine activities in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) — emphasizing that ongoing actions:**
 - **endanger the lives of Philippine personnel,**
 - **threaten the traditional fishing rights of Filipino fishermen, and**
 - **violate the sovereign rights of the Philippines as provided in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and affirmed in the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling.**
 - President Marcos said: “On the South China Sea, it is regrettable that incidents continue to occur in the West Philippine Sea that have put the lives of Philippine personnel and the safety of our vessels and aircraft at risk.”
 - In condemning China's recent announcement of a “national nature reserve” at Scarborough Reef, President Marcos said: **“The attempt of some actors to establish the so-called 'nature reserve' status over Bajo de Masinloc or Scarborough Shoal...clearly violates...the traditional fishing rights of our people guaranteed by international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, and affirmed by the final and binding 2016 Award on the South China Sea Arbitration and relevant domestic laws.”**
 - President Marcos reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to a peaceful approach rooted in international law, highlighting efforts to push for a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea.



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- **28 October 2025:** Taiwan launches initiative to promote global cooperation on improved security of undersea cables.
 - **Bottom-line:** in response to reported disruptions of undersea cables near Taiwan and around the world, *Taiwan announced the Management Initiative on International Undersea Cables – aiming to “bring together stakeholders, align standards, promote best practices and turn shared concerns into beneficial cooperation.”*
 - References:
 - [Taiwan unveils undersea cable security initiative \(Taipei Times, Oct. 29, 2025\)](#)
 - Key Points:
 - *Taiwan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Lin Chia-lung said the project would be “an open, inclusive and collaborative platform” to secure a future “where data flows freely and securely, where no nation is left behind and where connectivity is treated as a public good, not a geopolitical weapon.”*
 - The project will reportedly be known as “RISK,” an acronym for risk mitigation, information sharing, systemic reform and knowledge building.
 - Taiwan is highly reliant on undersea internet cables – which China-crewed ships have damaged on multiple occasions.
 - In September 2025, Taiwan’s Cabinet approved amendments to seven laws in an effort to bolster protection of undersea cables and other critical infrastructure, amid rising concerns over foreign disruption.
 - Additionally, in February 2025, Taiwan jailed a Chinese ship captain and deported his crew after the captain’s Togolese-registered cargo ship cut the Penghu cable.
 - *Taiwan’s steps to enhance protection of its critical undersea infrastructure coincide with reports that the European Union is seeking to boost the bloc’s powers to board and inspect vessels in Russia’s “shadow fleet,” in part because of the risk those vessels pose to critical infrastructure.*

- **October 2025:** new public website “FleetLeaks” assists with maritime sanctions enforcement action.

- **Bottom-line:** FleetLeaks is a free independent service that monitors sanctioned and suspect vessels globally based on designations from U.S. OFAC, UK OFSI, EU, and other jurisdictions – providing the live location of over 400 ships subject to maritime sanctions, including Russia-related “shadow fleet” vessels.



See how sanctions are synchronized across 6 jurisdictions.

- References:
 - [FleetLeaks, Russia-related Sanctioned Vessels Monitor](#)
- Key Points:
 - FleetLeaks provides a comprehensive free public service providing vessel designation, sanctions data, and ownership information combined with live location tracking – providing real-time maritime domain awareness over sanctioned vessels world-wide to enable transparency and accountability.



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- According to FleetLeaks:
“Maritime sanctions harmonization—the alignment of vessel designations across jurisdictions—determines compliance costs, enforcement gaps, and sanctions evasion risks. Six governments (UK, EU, U.S., Australia, Canada, New Zealand) coordinate vessel sanctions with varying degrees of overlap. [FleetLeaks’] analysis quantifies their alignment using official designation data updated daily.”
- FleetLeaks analysis has found that 525 vessels face multi-jurisdictional sanctions — strong evidence of international coordination on maritime enforcement, with multilateral sanctions overlap continuing to rise as countries harmonize designations.