DOD Releases Fiscal Year 2020 Freedom of Navigation Report



An MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to the Archangels of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 25 Detachment 6 prepares to land on the flight deck of the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) as part of a 2020 FONOP. *U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Shelby Tucker*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Department of Defense (DoD) released on March 10 its annual Freedom of Navigation (FON) Report for Fiscal Year 2020. During the period from Oct. 1, 2019, through Sept. 30, 2020, U.S. forces operationally challenged 28 different excessive maritime claims made by 19 different claimants throughout the world.

Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims – or incoherent legal theories of maritime entitlements – that are inconsistent with customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention pose a threat to the legal foundation of the rules-

based international order. Consequently, the United States is committed to confronting this threat by challenging excessive maritime claims.

DoD's operational challenges are also known as "FON assertions," "FON operations," and "FONOPs." The comprehensive, regular, and routine execution of these operations complements diplomatic engagements by the U.S. State Department and supports the longstanding U.S. national interest in freedom of the seas worldwide.

Upholding freedom of navigation as a principle supports unimpeded lawful commerce and the global mobility of U.S. forces. FONOPs demonstrate the United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows – regardless of the location of excessive maritime claims and regardless of current events.

Each year, DoD releases an unclassified summarized FON Report identifying the broad range of excessive maritime claims that are challenged by U.S. forces. The FON Report also includes general geographic information to describe the location of FON assertions while still maintaining operational security of U.S. military forces.

"Excessive maritime claims" are those that are inconsistent with international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. They include a variety of restrictions on the exercise of navigation and overflight rights and freedoms and other lawful uses of the sea. If left unchallenged, excessive maritime claims could limit the rights and freedoms enjoyed by the United States and other nations.

As long as restrictions on navigation and overflight rights and freedoms that exceed the authority provided under international law persist, the United States will continue to challenge such unlawful maritime claims.

The United States will uphold the rights, freedoms, and lawful

uses of the sea for the benefit of all nations – and will stand with like-minded partners doing the same.

Previous DoD FON Reports are available at http://policy.defense.gov/OUSDPOffices/FON.aspx