

USS Ralph Johnson Conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation in South China Sea



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson steams near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Anthony Collier

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson operated in the Spratly Islands on July 14 in a freedom of navigation operation that upheld the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea, recognized in international law, by challenging restrictions on innocent passage imposed by China, Vietnam, and Taiwan, U.S. Pacific Fleet public affairs said in a release.

Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea threaten the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations.

The U.S. challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant. The international community has an enduring role in preserving the freedom of the seas, which is critical to global security, stability, and prosperity.

U.S. forces continue to operate in the South China Sea daily as they have for more than a century. U.S. 7th Fleet conducts forward-deployed naval operations in support of U.S. national interests in the Indo-Pacific area of operations. As the Navy's largest numbered fleet, 7th Fleet interacts with 35 other maritime nations to build partnerships that foster maritime security, promote stability and prevent conflict.