



GLOBAL EYE INTELLIGENCE

THE SABINA SHOAL CONFRONTATION

ESCALATION IN TENSION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA



TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South China Sea has been witnessing an escalation in tension between China and American allies since April 2024. Repeated maritime confrontations have occurred in the region, with the most recent incident happening in the Sabina Shoal region. This report analyses the Collision of naval vessels that happened in the Sabina Shoal of the South China sea.



SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

- **Location** - Sabina Shoal is located 140 km (86 miles) west of the Philippine Island of Palawan. Sabina Shoal is a coral reef formation with a central lagoon surrounded by discontinued shallow sections. This is located inside the 200 nautical miles of the Philippines which comes under the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which the 1982 UN convention has decided on the law of the sea. However, it has also been claimed by China.
- **Time frame** - Tensions have escalated significantly since April 2024, with multiple incidents occurring over the past few weeks. The latest confrontation took place on August 31, 2024.
- **Parties Involved** -
 - China: Asserting its territorial claims over the Sabina Shoal.
 - Philippines: Defending its sovereign rights within its EEZ.
 - United States: Alleged involvement through interference in Chinese activities in the region.
 - Japan: Concerned observer due to its reliance on the South China Sea for trade



CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

- The Sabina Shoal of the South China Sea has become the new flashpoint of naval contestation. China and Philippines vessels had a series of encounters in the South China Sea region since April 2024.
- Forces involved: - China has deployed a mix of coast guard vessels, maritime militia and naval warships which demonstrates a significant show of force. While they primarily used its coast guard ships with limited naval support to assert its rights over the region.



Recent development: - China and the Philippines accused each other on August 31st of the intentional ramming of the Coast Guard ships of both countries, the collision happened between BRP TERESA MAGBANUA (MRRV- 9701) which is the largest coast guard ship of the Philippines and the CCG 5205 vessel of China. The Chinese Coast Guard spokesperson accused the Philippine vessel had “deliberately colliding with” a Chinese vessel near the shoal, while Manila accused the “direct and intentional ramming over the Philippine vessel”. This is the 5th maritime confrontation in a month between both countries. This event happened just a day after China alleged the US and the Philippines that they have interfered in China’s scientific research in the region. Prior to this incident, China has been accused of blocking two Philippine Coast Guard vessels, using an excessive force of 40 ships, including three warships.



THREAT ASSESSMENT

- **Enemy capabilities:** - China has the added advantage of its superior naval capability including the larger and most advanced fleet of Coast Guard vessels and warships. The Philippines are outmatched in terms of naval power, but maintain a strategic advantage in operating in its EEZ zone which is likely to add international sympathy and potential support.
- **Intentions:** China wants to assert and consolidate its claims over the South China Sea region. While the Philippines wants to defend its sovereignty and seek to maintain a balance of power in the region, with the help of its allies.
- **Potential scenarios:** The recent developments show that Sabina Shoal has become the most contested region in the world, which has a greater potential for further military confrontation. These events may lead to the potential ramifications of global trade routes due to its proximity towards the key shipping lanes. The involvement of external powers, particularly the United States and Japan, indicates that the incident may have broader implications beyond the immediate region.



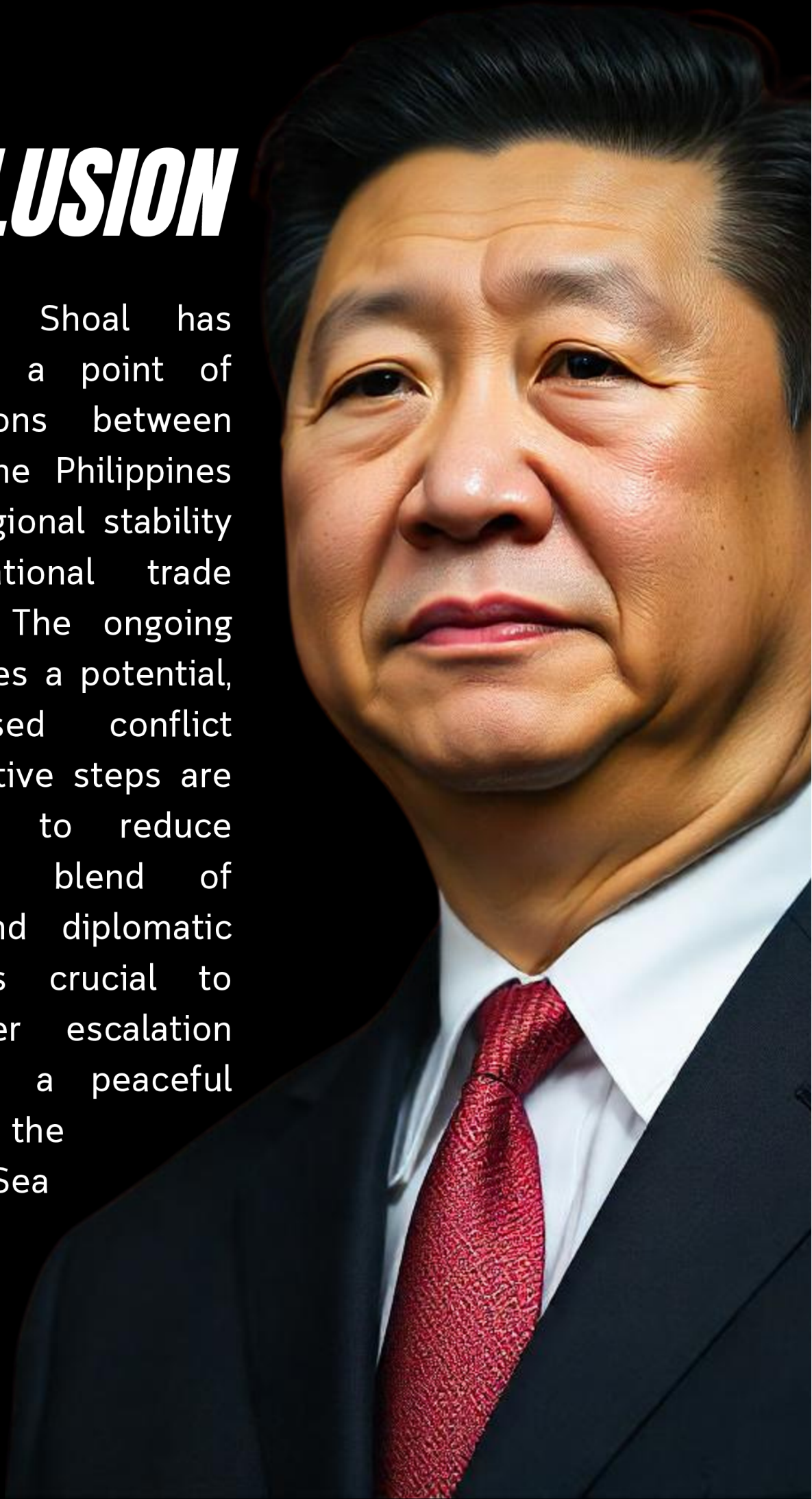
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tactical recommendations: Enhanced situational awareness has to be ensured with the help of ISR operations to monitor Chinese movement in the region and pre-empt potential confrontations.
- Strategic recommendations: Active pursuit of diplomatic channels to reduce the tension and establish a framework for the peaceful negotiation of dispute.



CONCLUSION

The Sabina Shoal has emerged as a point of rising tensions between China and the Philippines impacting regional stability and international trade significantly. The ongoing trend indicates a potential, for increased conflict unless proactive steps are implemented to reduce tensions. A blend of readiness and diplomatic strategies is crucial to avoid further escalation and achieve a peaceful settlement of the South China Sea disputes.



GLOBAL EYE

INTELLIGENCE

