

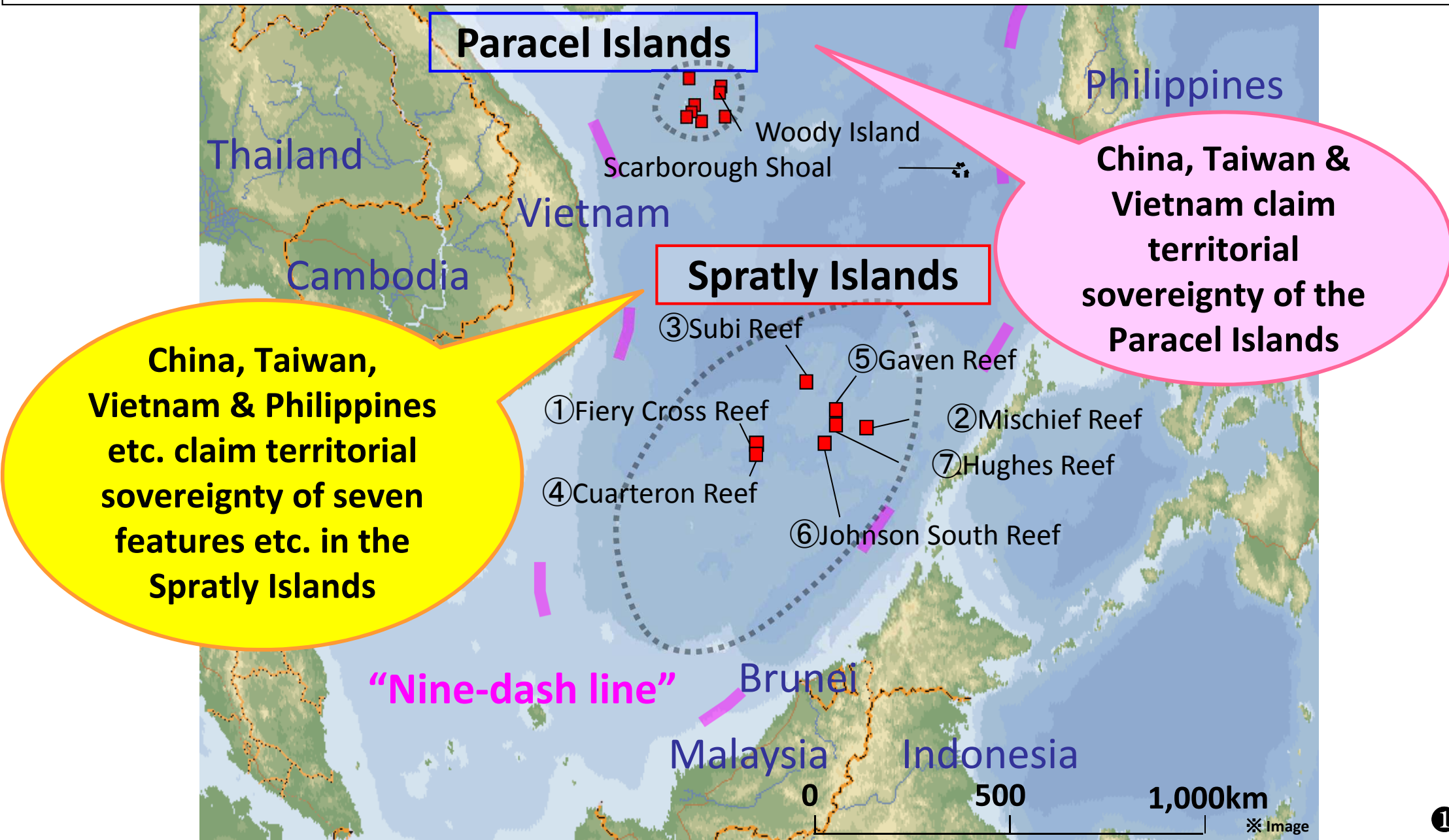


China's Activities in the South China Sea (China's development activities on the features and trends in related countries)

March 2021
Japan Ministry of Defense

(Summary 1/3) Overall View of the South China Sea (SCS)

- In the SCS, **claims conflict between ASEAN countries and China over the territorial rights of Spratly and Paracel islands**



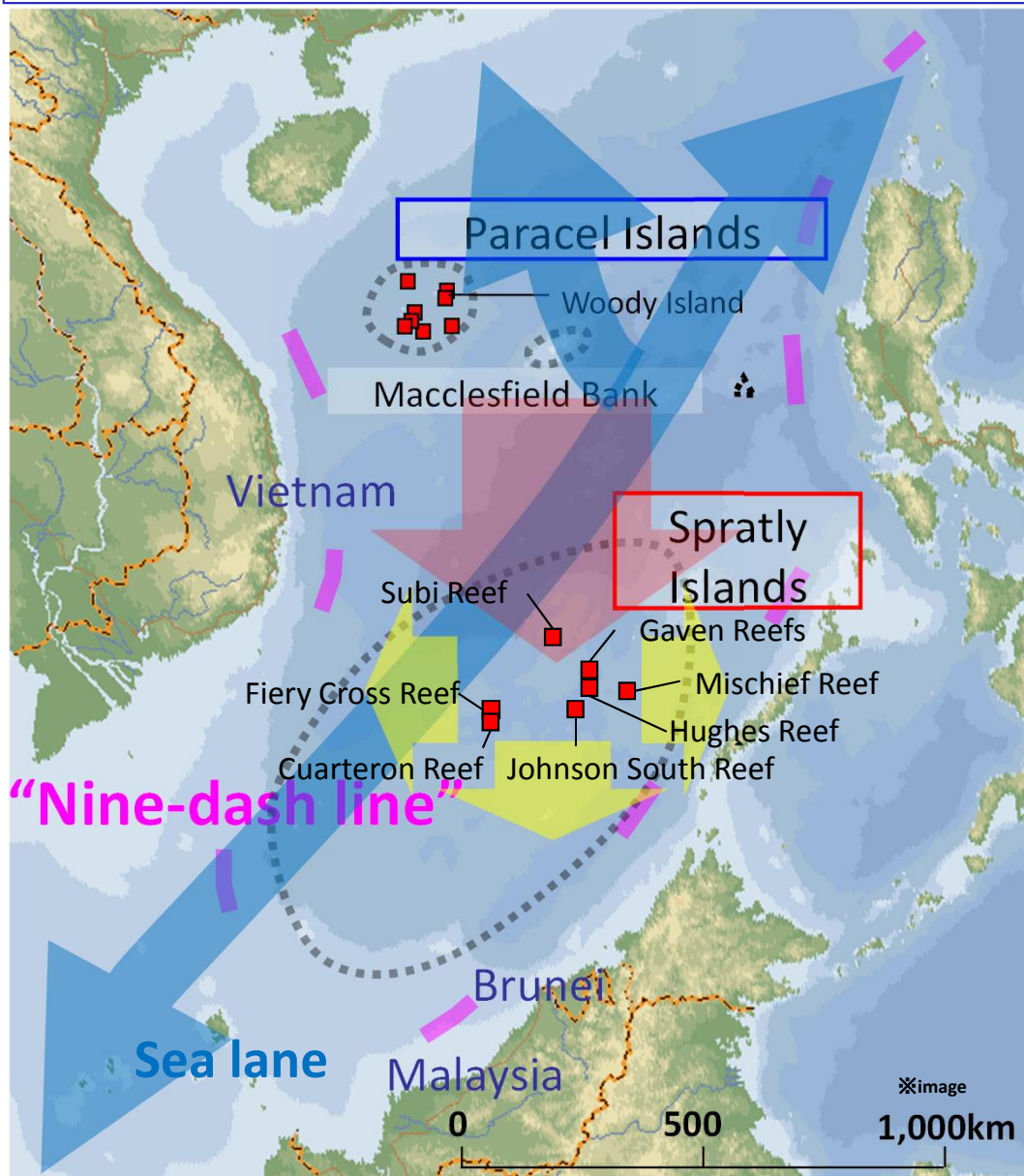
(Summary 2/3) China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS

- Since 2014, China has pressed ahead with **rapid and large-scale land reclamation works in 7 features in the Spratlys**. By the late-2015 when the reclamation had been mostly completed, area of the reclamation work was approx. 12.9 km² (Other countries in the region conducted land reclamation of approx. 0.2 km² in the same period of time).
- After completing reclamation, **China militarizes the features further, continuously developing various infrastructure and deploying military assets.**
- In November 2018, it was reported that **China installed what appears to be an information collection sensor in Bombay Reef in the Paracels without large-scale reclamation.**

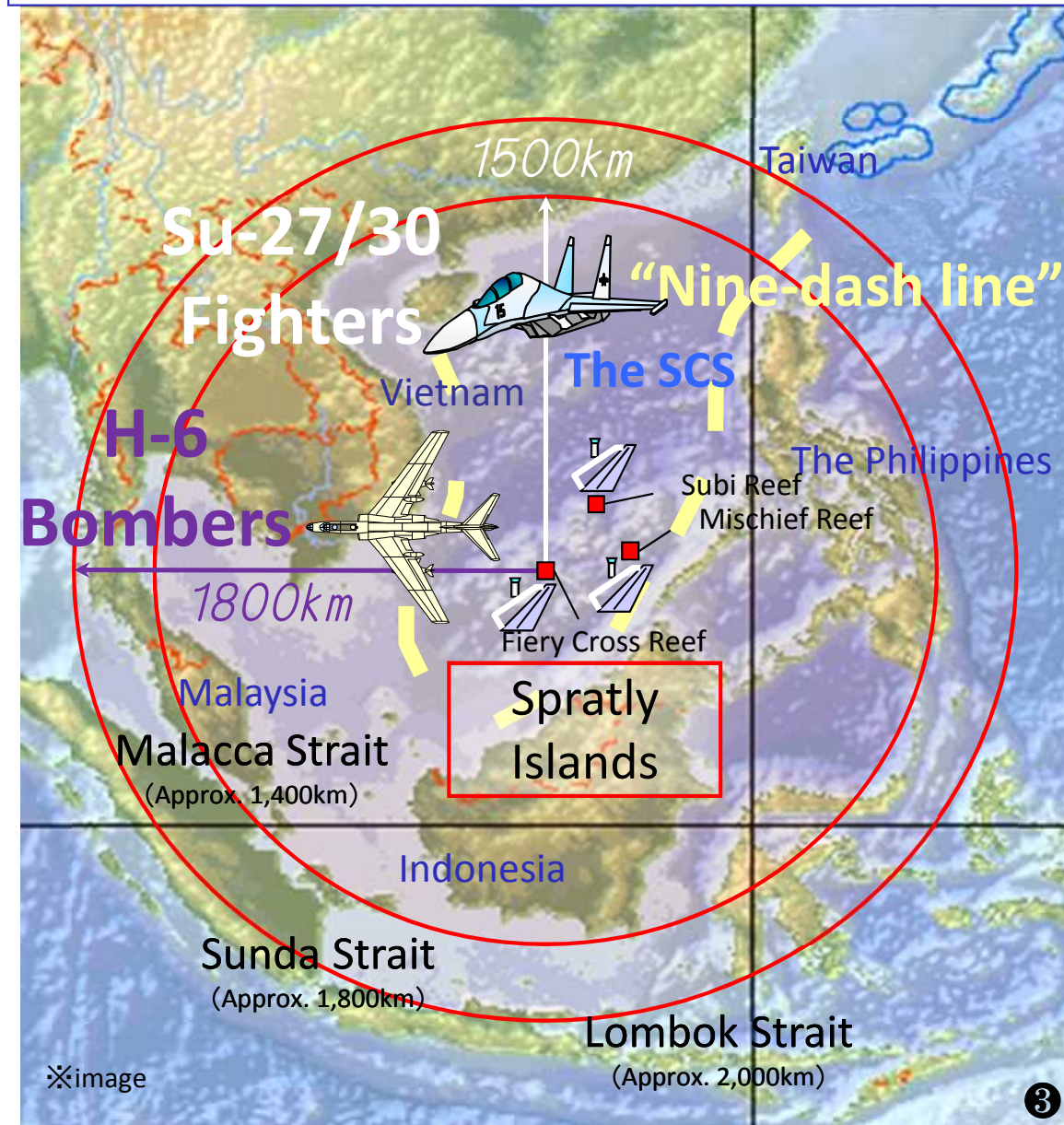


(Summary 3/3) Security Implications

Building port facilities in the SCS **could dramatically improve China's ISR and other mission capabilities in the SCS**



Runway construction on the Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reefs (incl. 3,000m-class) would lead to **increase in China's air force presence in the SCS**



South China Sea

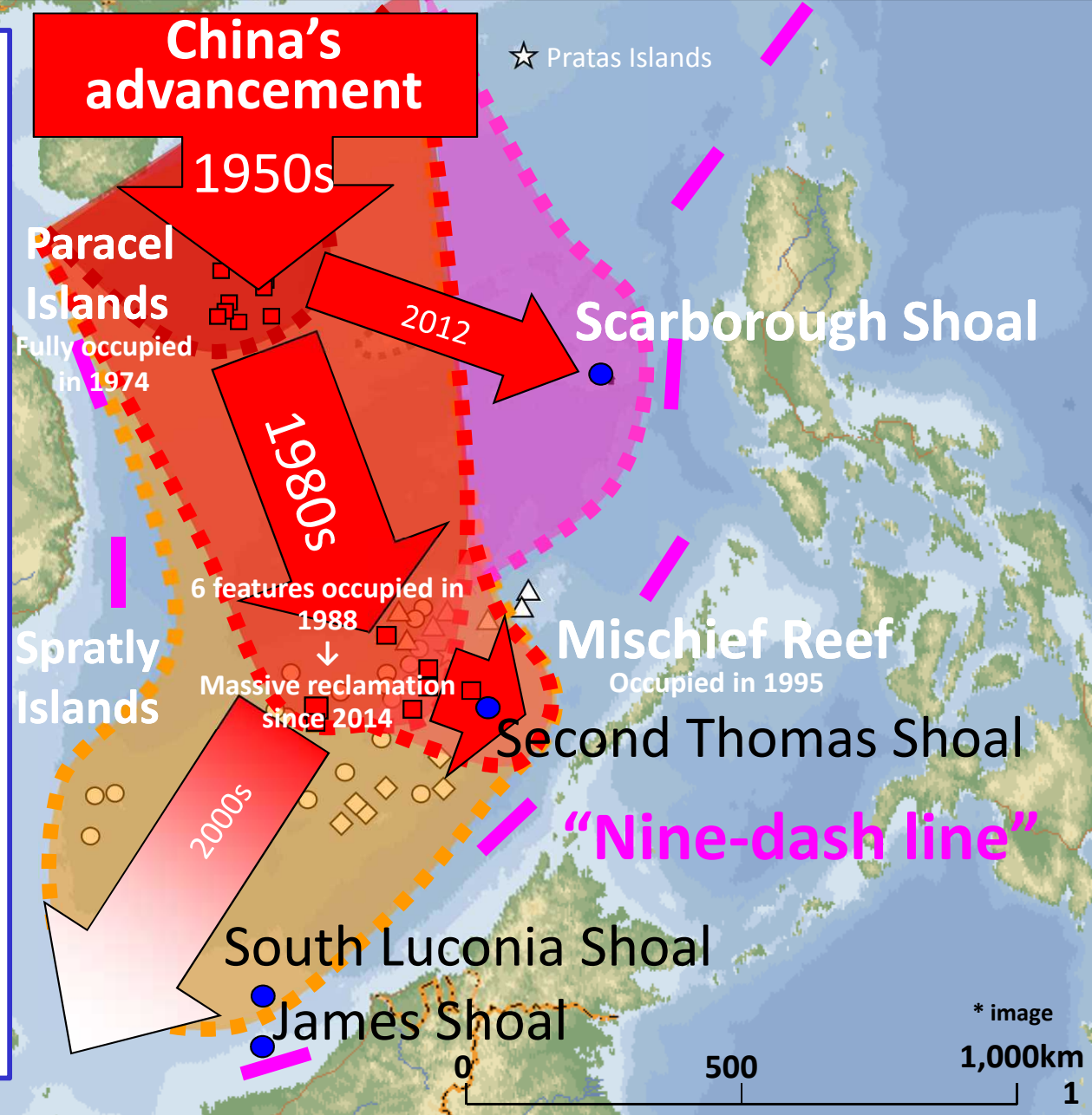
1. China's Occupation in the Spratly Islands

1-1 China Makes Advances into the SCS

China has made advances into the SCS by **exploiting power vacuums** (to the Paracel Islands in 50s-70s and to the Spratly Islands since 80s.)

Timeline

- 1950s : France withdraws from French Indochina
↓
1950s : China occupies half of the Paracel Islands
(South Vietnam also advances to Paracel Islands)
↓
1973 : U.S. withdraws from South Vietnam
↓
1974 : China occupies the entire Paracel Islands after
dislodging South Vietnam
(1975 : Collapse of South Vietnam after the Vietnam War)
- Mid-1980s : Soviet military in Vietnam decreases
↓
1980s : China advances to the Spratly Islands
1988 : China occupies 6 features of the Spratly Islands
↓
1992 : U.S. withdraws from the Philippines
↓
1995 : China occupies Mischief Reef
- 2000s : China advances to the southern SCS
- 2012 : China gains *de facto* control over Scarborough Shoal
- 2014- : China conducts **rapid and large-scale reclamation
and infrastructure building in the SCS**



1-2 China's Occupation in the SCS (before reclamation)

- China gained *de facto* control over 7 maritime features in the Spratlys and built structures at all of the 7 features
- Based on its sovereignty claim, China has taken legislative and administrative actions such as the enactment of **the Law on Territorial Sea (1992)**, the establishment of **Sansha City and the Sansha Security District (2012)**, and the establishment of **Xisha and Nansha Districts under Sansha City (2020)**.

Structures on features etc.

■ : China's

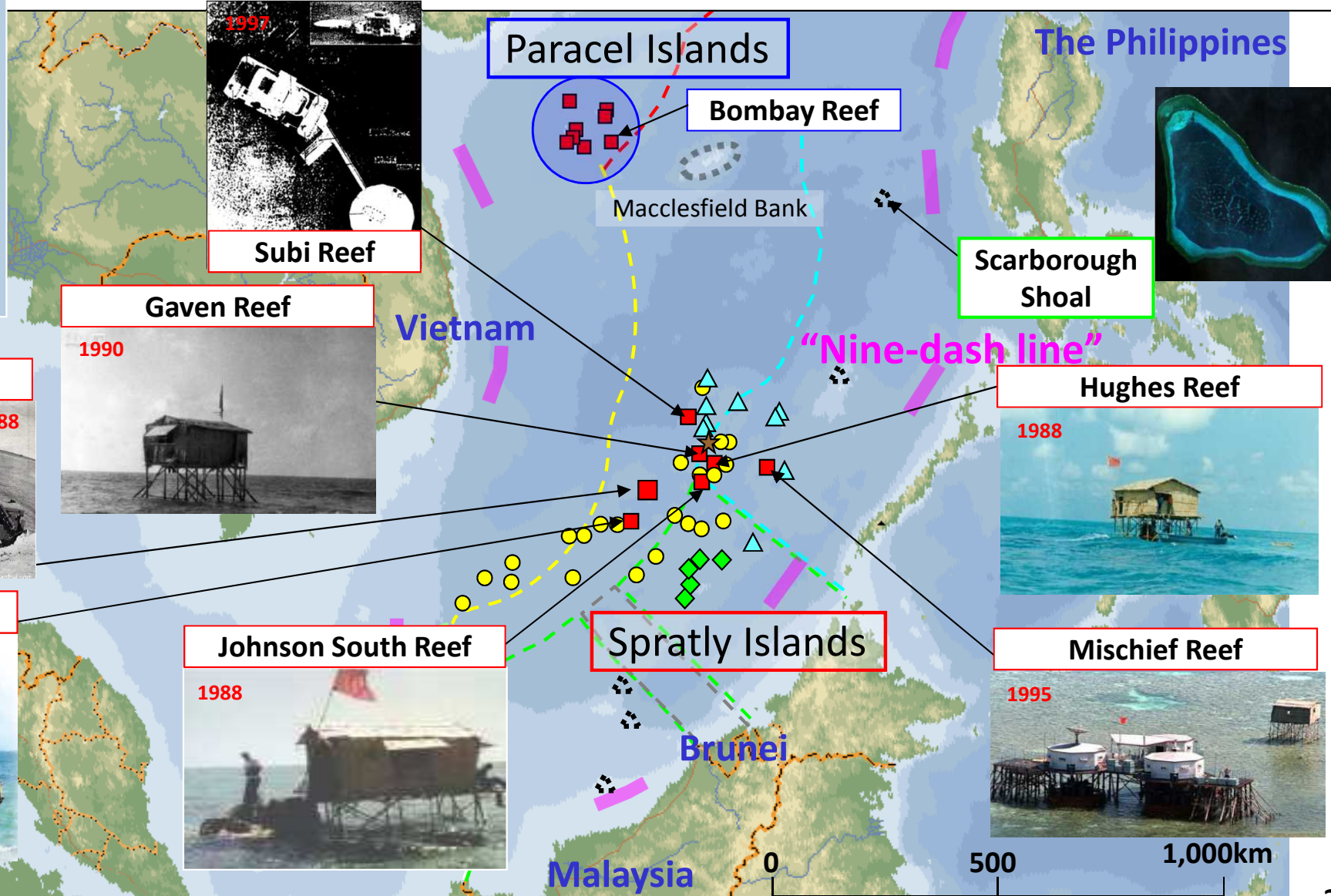
★ : Taiwan's

● : Vietnam's

▲ : the Philippines'

◆ : Malaysia's

※ Thin dash lines show 200 NM from coasts geographically

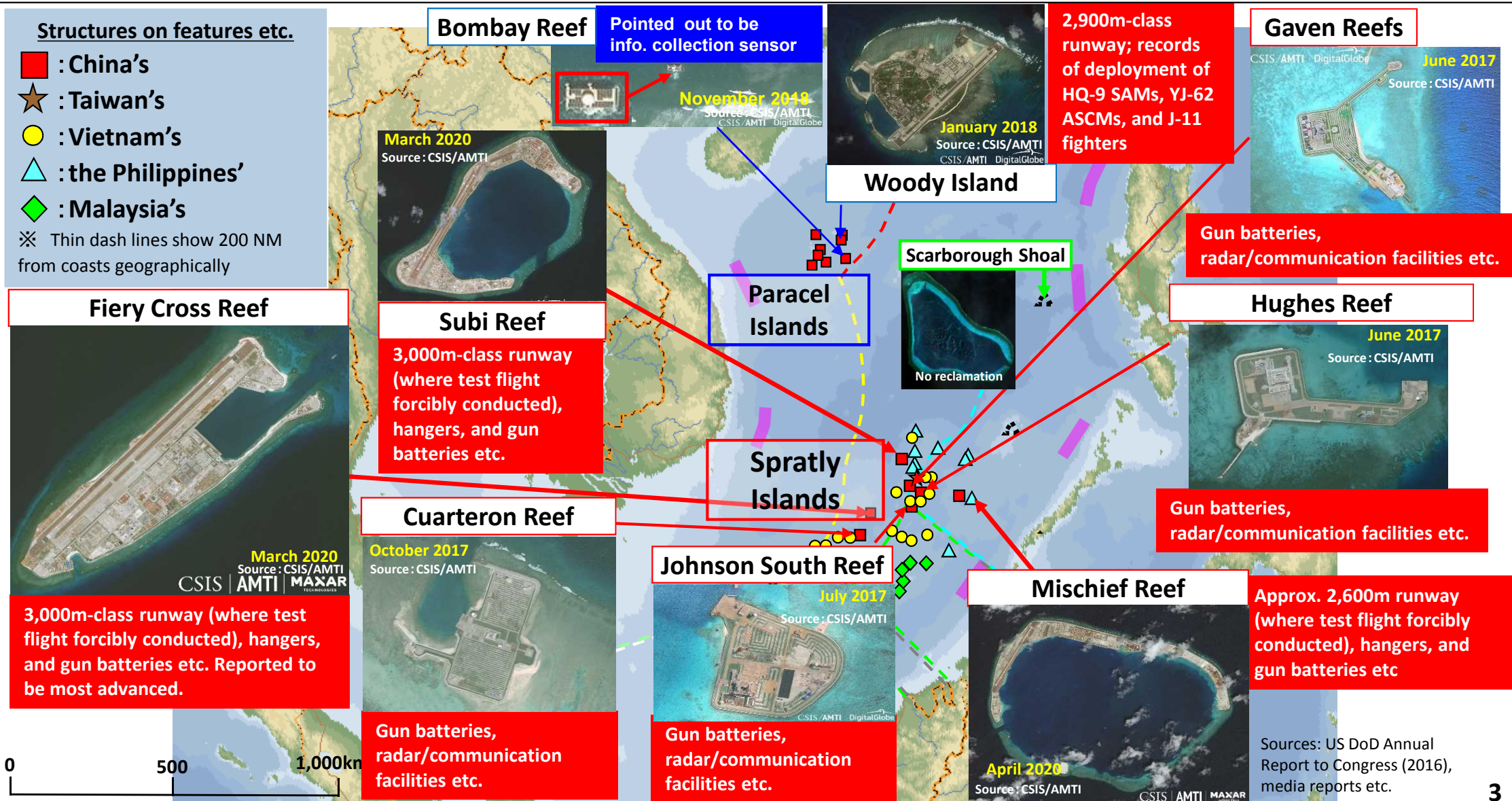


※ image

(Ref.) Media reports etc.

1-3 China's Occupation in the SCS after Reclamation①

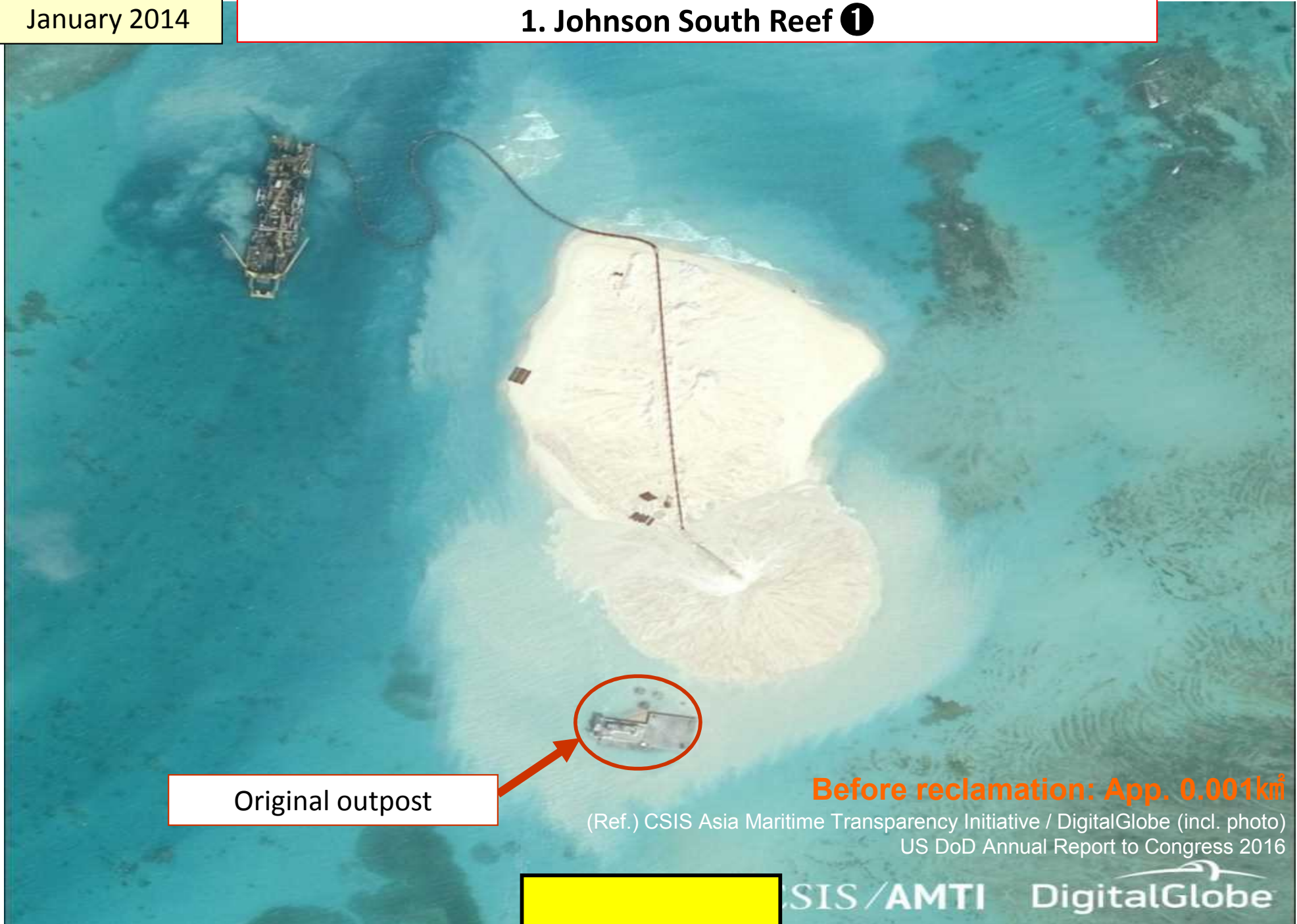
- Since 2013, China has conducted **runway extension works at Woody Island** in the Paracels.
- Since 2014, China has pressed ahead with **rapid and large-scale land reclamation works in 7 features in the Spratlys**. By the late-2015 when the reclamation had been mostly completed, area of the reclamation work was approx. 12.9 km².
- After the completion of the reclamation, China continues **developing infrastructure which can be used for military purposes , with further militarization**.



1-4 China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS (for each feature) ①

January 2014

1. Johnson South Reef ①



Original outpost

Before reclamation: App. 0.001km²

(Ref.) CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe (incl. photo)
US DoD Annual Report to Congress 2016

CSIS/AMTI

DigitalGlobe

1. Johnson South Reef²

Descriptions of infrastructure are based on points made by CSIS/AMTI, US DoD annual report to the Congress (2017), and other open sources.

July 2017

After reclamation: App. 0.109km²
(Reclamation completed in 2014)

Quay

Radar/communications facility

Helipad

Gun Battery

Dredged channel

Lighthouse

Gun Battery

App. 320m

App. 380m

Gun Battery

Power generation
(Solar array)

Radar/communications facility

Headquarters

Original outpost

Sources: CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (photo) / U.S. DoD Annual Report to Congress 2017 (size) / Google Earth (length)

1-4 China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS (for each feature) ②

2. Hughes Reef ①

February 2010

Original outpost

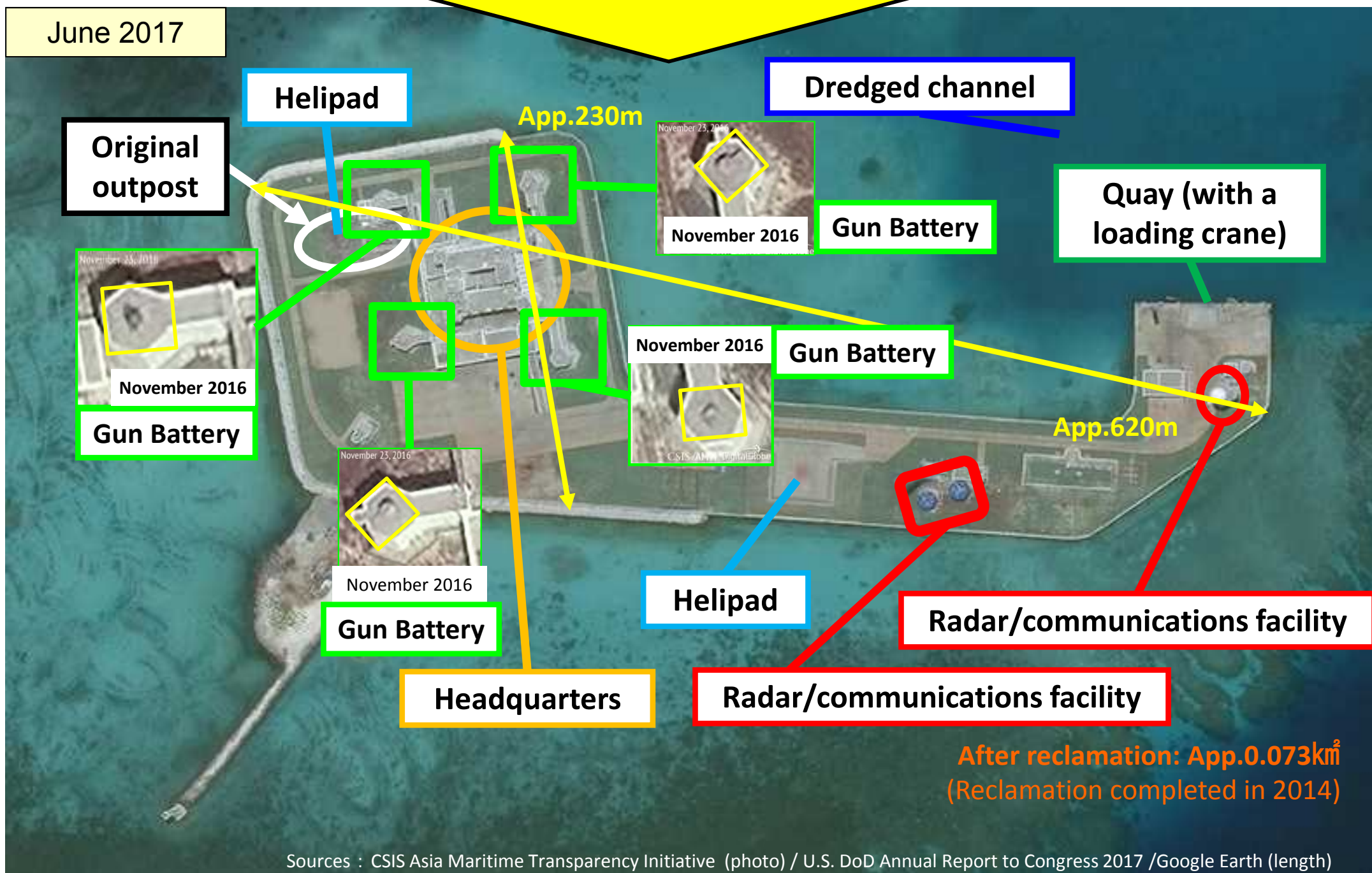
Before reclamation: App. 0.001km²

(Ref.) CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe (incl. photo)
US DoD Annual Report to Congress 2016

2. Hughes Reef ②

Descriptions of infrastructure are based on points made by CSIS/AMTI, US DoD annual report to the Congress (2017), and other open sources.

June 2017



1-4 China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS (for each feature) ③

March 2013

3. Cuarteron Reef ①



Original outpost

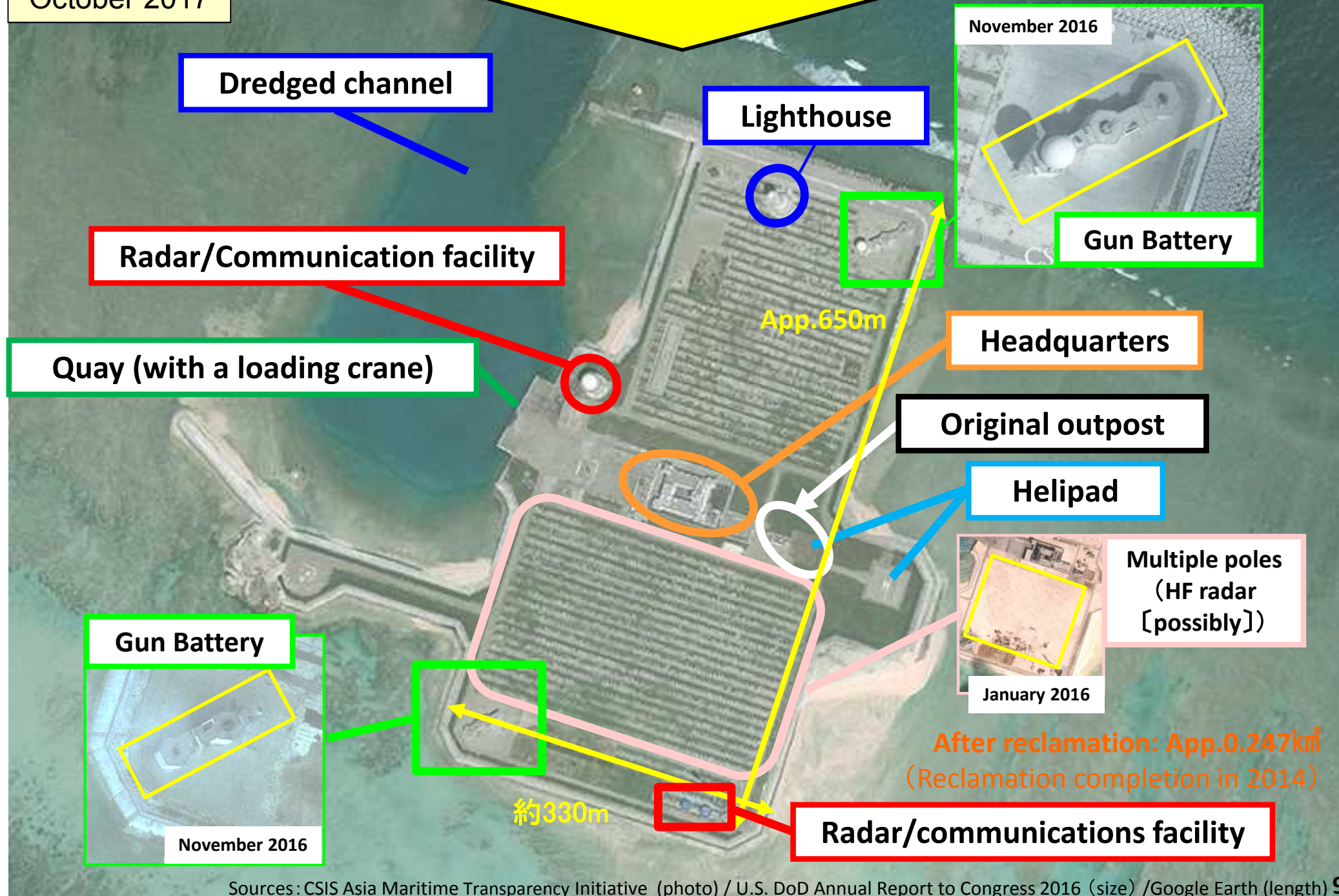
Before reclamation: App. 0.001km²

(Ref.) CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe (incl. photo)
US DoD Annual Report to Congress 2016

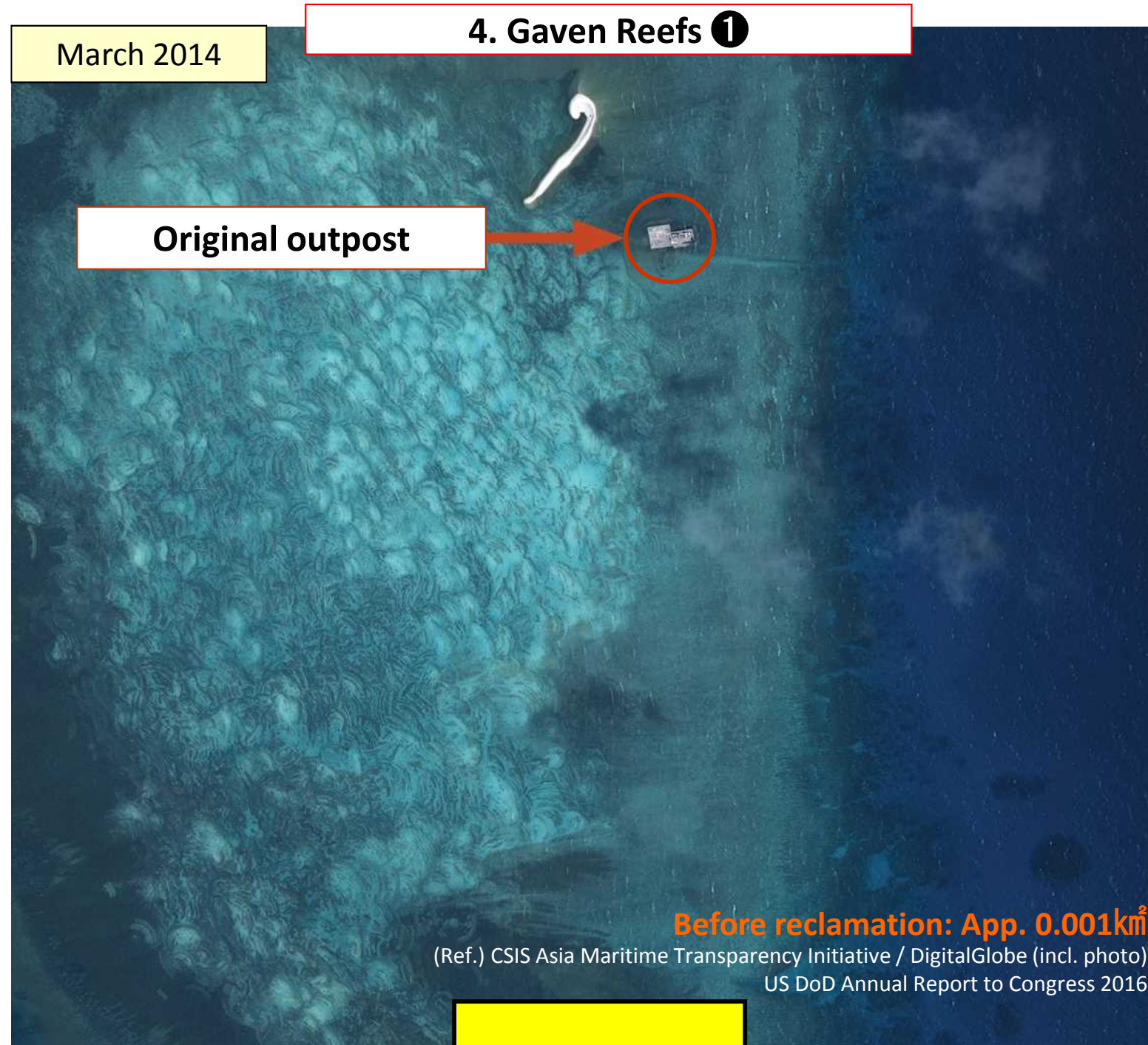
3. Cuarteron Reef ②

Descriptions of infrastructure are based on points made by CSIS/AMTI, US DoD annual report to the Congress (2017), and other open sources.

October 2017

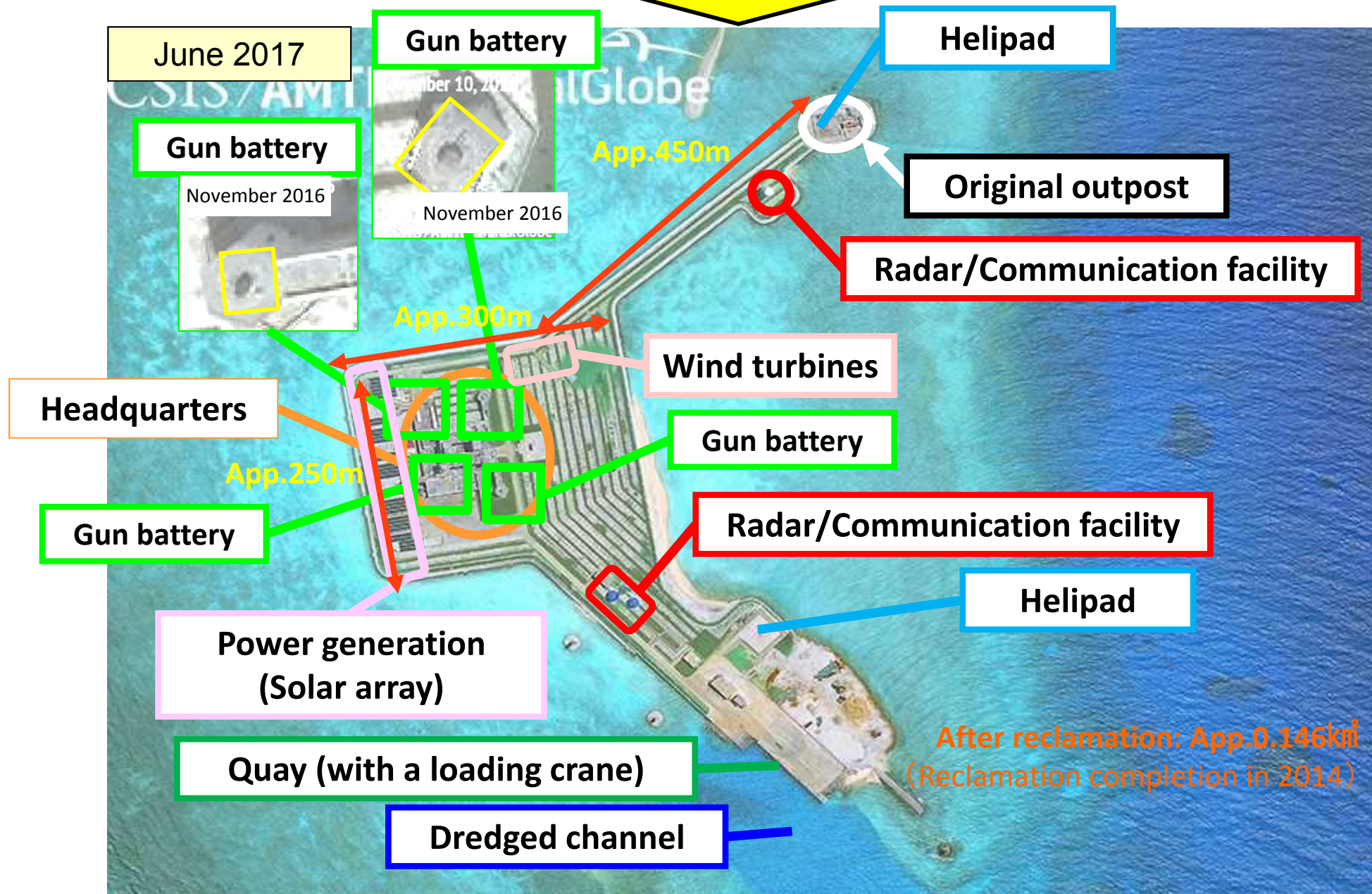


1-4 China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS (for each feature) ④



4. Gaven Reefs ②

Descriptions of infrastructure are based on points made by CSIS/AMTI, US DoD annual report to the Congress (2017), and other open sources.



Sources : CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (photo) / U.S. DoD Annual Report to Congress 2017 /Google Earth (length)

1-4 China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS (for each feature) ⑤

August 2014

5. Fiery Cross Reef^①



Original outpost

Before reclamation: App. 0.010km²

(Ref.) CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe (incl. photo)
US DoD Annual Report to Congress 2016

5. Fiery Cross Reef^②

Descriptions of infrastructure are based on points made by CSIS/AMTI, US DoD annual report to the Congress (2017), and other open sources.

March 2020

- Radar/Sensor Array
- Hangers (completed)
- SAM shelters
- Gun battery
- Underground storage facility
- Runway (completed)



March 2017

Hangers



November 2016

Gun battery

Runway (approx. 3,000m)



Gun battery

November 11, 2016

November 2016

Gun battery App. 3,750m



November 11, 2016

November 2016

Gun battery



November 2016



2017年6月

Radar/communications facility



June 2017

Radar/communications facility

Underground storage facility (confirmed in June)

SAM shelters

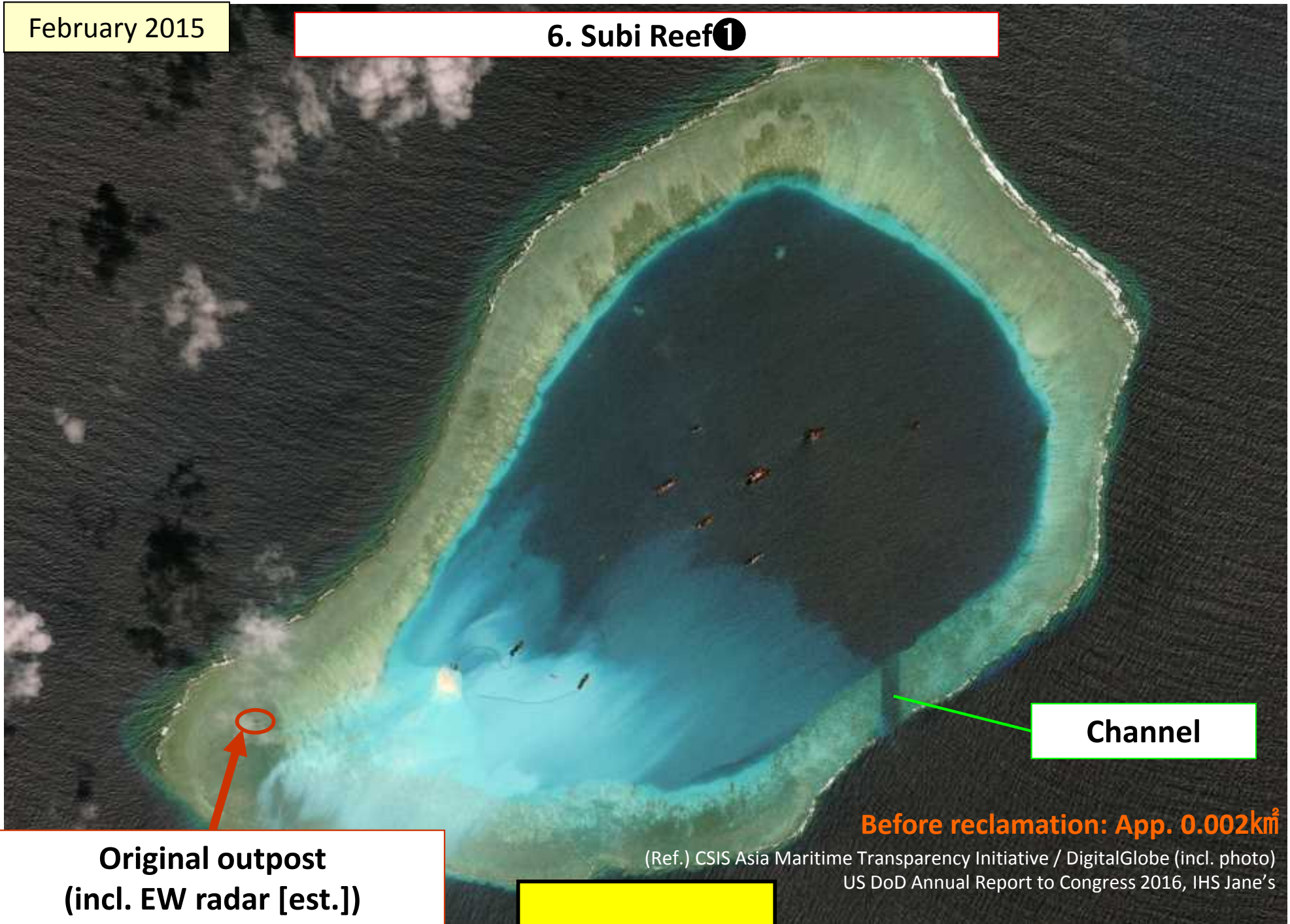
After reclamation: App. 2.72km²
(Reclamation completed in 2015)

Original outpost

1-4 China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS (for each feature) ⑥

February 2015

6. Subi Reef ①









6. Subi Reef²

Descriptions of infrastructure are based on points made by CSIS/AMTI, US DoD annual report to the Congress (2017), and other open sources.

March 2020

After reclamation: App. 4.11km²
(Reclamation completed in 2015)

-  Radar/Communication facility
-  Hangers (completed)
-  SAM shelters
-  Gun battery
-  Underground storage facility
-  Runway (completed)

Gun battery

November 2016

Gun battery

November 17, 2016

November 2016

App.5,500m

March 2017

Hangers

Runway (approx. 3,000m)

Gun battery

November 17, 2016

November 2016



Subi Reef March 14, 2017

March 2017

Radar/Communication facility

Channel widened

Radar/Communication facility

2017年3月

2017年3月



High-frequency "elephant cage" radar array

Gun battery



November 17, 2016

November 2016

Underground storage facility

SAM Shelters

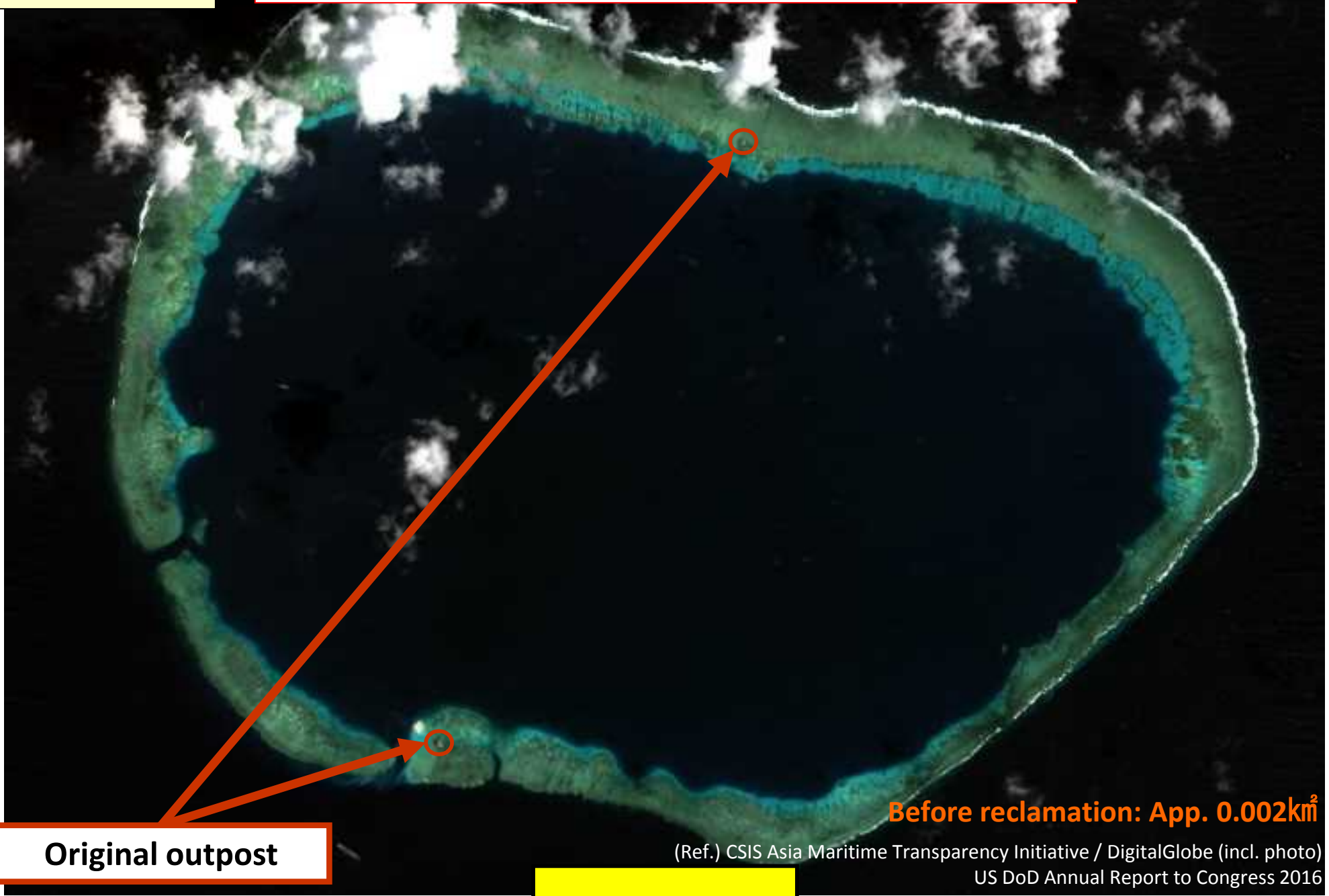
Original outpost

Sources : CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (photo) / U.S. DoD Annual Report to Congress 2017 /Google Earth (length)

1-4 China's Reclamation Activities in the SCS (for each feature) ⑦

February 2015

7. Mischief Reef①



Original outpost

Before reclamation: App. 0.002km²

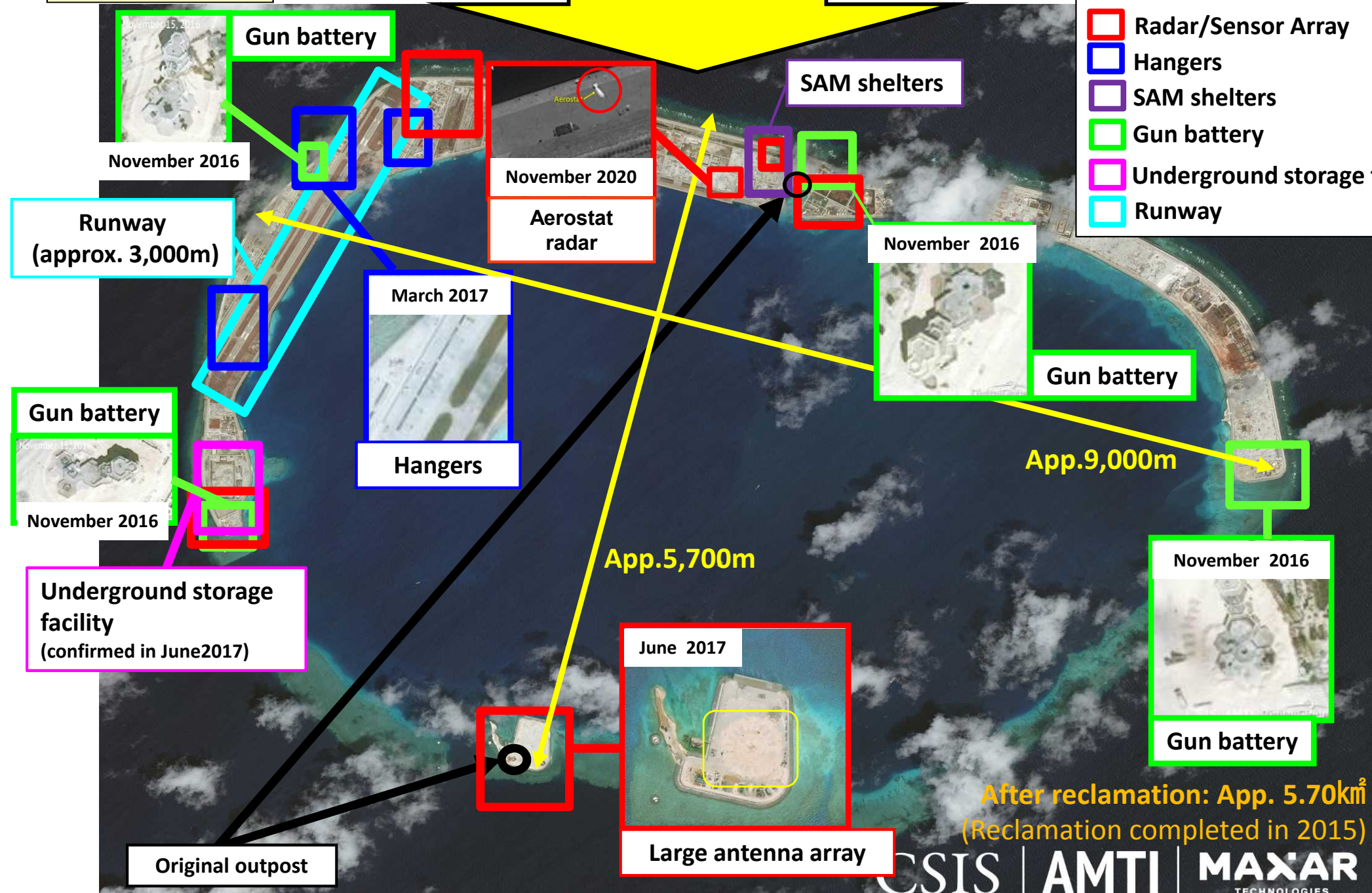
(Ref.) CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe (incl. photo)
US DoD Annual Report to Congress 2016

7. Mischief Reef^②

Descriptions of infrastructure are based on points made by CSIS/AMTI, US DoD annual report to the Congress (2017), and other open sources.

April 2020

- Radar/Sensor Array
- Hangers
- SAM shelters
- Gun battery
- Underground storage facility
- Runway



Sources : CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (photo) / U.S. DoD Annual Report to Congress 2017 /Google Earth (length)

1-5 China's remarks about the activity on the SCS

Initially, China denied its intentions to pursue militarization, and repeatedly mentioned the necessity of “defensive facilities”. Recently, government media reports that the reclamation works are “to strengthen the necessary military defences of the South China sea”

- September 2015 : On his visit to the U.S., President Xi stated “China does not intend to pursue militarization” in the SCS.
- February 2016 : Foreign Minister Wang Yi said “(As an answer to the question regarding a report about the deployment of SAM systems on Woody Island, the report is a fake created by some western media, and) China’s limited, necessary defense facilities on Nansha (Spratly) Islands are in accordance with international law, which endows every sovereign state with the rights of self-protection and self-defense. These facilities have nothing to do with militarization”
- December 2017 : CHINA NANHAI✕reported “To strengthen the necessary military defense of the South China sea within China’s sovereignty, China has rationally expanded the area of its islands and reefs .”

✕ CHINA NANHAI (nanhai.haiwainet.cn) is a website jointly run by the National Marine Data and Information Service and the People’s Daily Overseas Edition. The website opened in August 2016.

South China Sea

2. Recent activities of PLA in the South China Sea

2-1 Recent activities of PLA in the South China Sea①

Points made by CSIS/AMTI (May 9, 2018) and Jane's Online (May 12, 2020)

Ref. CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe, CNBC, Jane's Online

- Satellite imagery from April 28 reveals the first image of a **military aircraft Y-8, deployed to China's base at Subi Reef(a)**. **With these deployments, military aircraft have now verifiably landed on all of "Big three".** (April 2016, a transport aircraft landed at Fiery Cross Reef to evacuate personnel who had fallen ill. A photo in January 2018 shows two Y-7 military transport aircraft on Mischief Reef (b))
- On April 9, the WSJ published satellite imagery showing **military jamming equipment on Mischief Reef (c)**. The article cited a U.S. official who said **the jamming systems were deployed to Fiery Cross Reef as well.**
- On May 2, CNBC reported that China had **deployed YJ-12B anti-ship cruise missiles and HQ-9B surface-to-air missile systems on each of the reefs in Spratly island as part of military exercises in early April.** This is the first confirmed placement of such platforms on the islands.
- On May 12, 2020, Jane's Online reported that China possibly deployed aircraft including **Y-8 patrol and Y-9 early warning aircraft and other aircraft to the Fiery Cross Reef in rotation(d)**

CSIS/AMTI satellite image



Philippine Daily Inquirer aerial image



CSIS/AMTI satellite image



【Vietnamese MOFA Spokesperson (May 8, 2018)】
"Vietnam is deeply concerned about the information. All militarized activities, including the installation of missiles on Spratly archipelago, seriously violate the country's sovereignty over the islands. The actions cause tension and instability in the region."

(a) A Y-8 at the airstrip on Subi Reef, April 28, 2018.

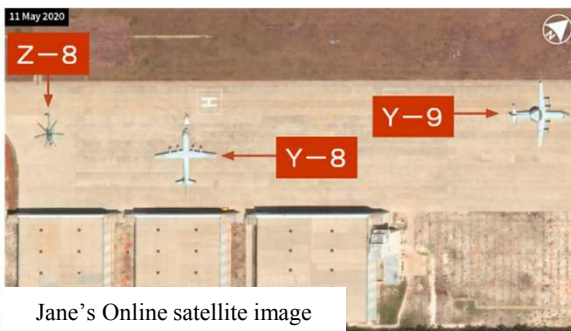
(b) Two Y-7s on the apron at Mischief Reef, January 6, 2018. (Photo provided by The Philippine Daily Inquirer.)

(c) Military jamming equipment deployed on Mischief Reef, May 6, 2018. (under covers)

【Ref.】CNBC reported on May 2, 2018

The **missile platforms of YJ-12B ASCM and HQ-9B SAM were moved to the outposts in the Spratly Islands within the past 30 days, according to sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Pentagon official told CNBC "The further militarization of outposts will only serve to raise tensions and create greater distrust among claimants."**

(d) Z-8, Y-8 and Y-9 at the airstrip on Fiery Cross Reef, May 12, 2020.



Jane's Online satellite image



YJ-12ASCM
(Max range 500km)



HQ-9SAM
(Max range 200km)

※YJ-12 was originally developed as an air-to-ship missile, but recently the development of surface launched and ship launched variant is pointed out.

2-1 Recent activities of PLA in the South China Sea②

Points made by CSIS/AMTI (May 9, 2018)

Ref. CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe, CNBC, Jane's Online

- Most of **China's recent deployments in the Big three followed a pattern set earlier at Woody Island, its largest outpost and administrative seat in the Paracel Islands**. From harbor dredging and runway improvements to hangar and radar construction, upgrades at Woody Island have served as a blueprint for things to come on China's Spratly holdings to the south. China deployed HQ-9s and anti-ship cruise missiles(YJ-62s) to Woody in 2016. Satellite imagery also captured five Y-8 aircraft on the island in November 2017 (a). China has repeatedly deployed J-10 and J-11 fighter jets to Woody Island (b). Satellite imagery from April 2016 also captured what are believed to be Z-8 helicopters and BZK-005 drone deployed to Woody Island(c)。



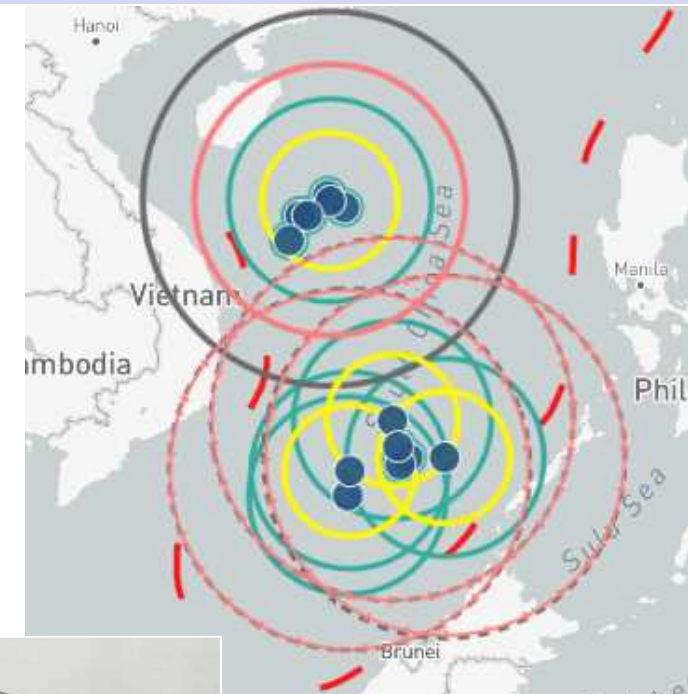
(a) Total five Y-8 on Woody Island, November 15, 2017



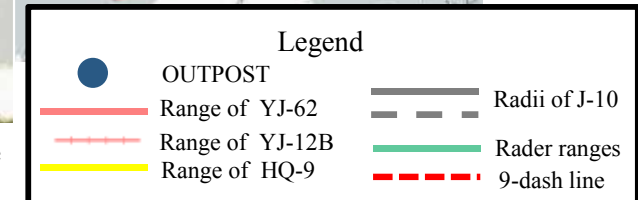
(b) J-11B fighter jets parked on Woody Island, April 26, 2016

(c) A helicopter believed to be a Z-8 and a drone believed to be a BZK-005 on Woody Island, April 26, 2016.

Chinese Detection/ Defense Capabilities in the SCS



【Ref.】YJ-62ASCM (Max range 280km) (IHS Jane's Online)



2-1 Recent activities of PLA in the South China Sea③

Ref. CSIS Asia Maritime
Transparency Initiative /
DigitalGlobe, CNBC, Jane's
Online

- On May 18, 2018, China Ministry of Defense announced that **PLAF H-6K bombers and other aircraft conducted takeoff and landing exercises in “the southern sea area”**.
- Then, CSIS/AMTI and Defense News etc. stated that they had identified the location of the excises as **Woody Island in the Paracels**.
- These exercises were **the first confirmed case** where China landed its bombers on an airstrip on the South China Sea features.

【China Ministry of Defense's comment(May 18, 2018)】

“PLAF H-6K bombers improving maritime combat capability through take off and landing exercises on islands” :

A division of the PLAF recently conducted takeoff and landing exercises on islands with organized various multiple bombers including H-6K and trained to improve “Full Territory, Full-time Assault and All-round Strike” capabilities. The commander Hao Jianke took the lead in piloting and taking off on an H-6K bomber from an airfield in the southern area. The division conducted assault training onto targets on the sea and then performed takeoff and landing exercises at an airfield on an island, achieving the goals of the training and equipping experience of takeoff and landing on islands with the PLAF bomber units. . . . Focusing on realizing the strategic objectives of “Air and Space Integration, Both Offensive & Defensive Operations,” the PLAF is marching towards the modernization of entire-territory-operations and the transformation into a strategic military service. According to an military expert, Wang Mingliang, the bombers' deployment to conduct takeoff and landing exercises in the southern sea area contributes to the improvement of the combat capability in response to the threats on the maritime safety as well as the preparation of war and the training of combat capability.

People's Daily reported the video of H-6K conducting takeoff and landing exercises

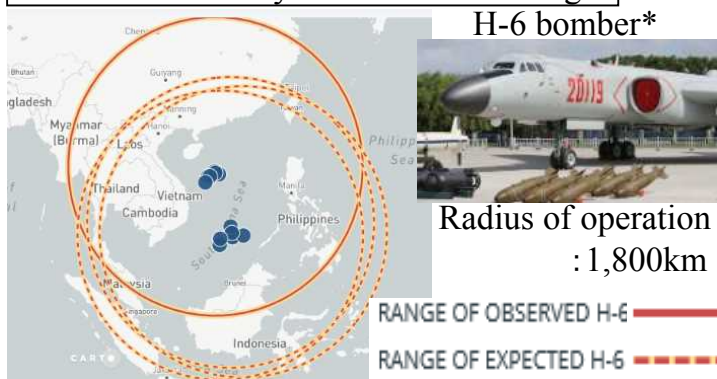


※Defense News identified the location of the excise as Woody Island based on this video

Philippines and Vietnam criticized the issue

Example of military aircraft that was deployed in South China Sea (based on the classification by CSIS/AMTI, including presumption)

CSIS/AMTI Analysis on H-6's Coverage



*The most advanced H-6 variant is H-6K, it is pointed out that its radius of operation reaches 3,500km.

Woody Island

Spratly Islands



Fiery Cross Reef

Mischief Reef

Subi Reef

2-2 The commission of the first indigenous CV “Shandong”

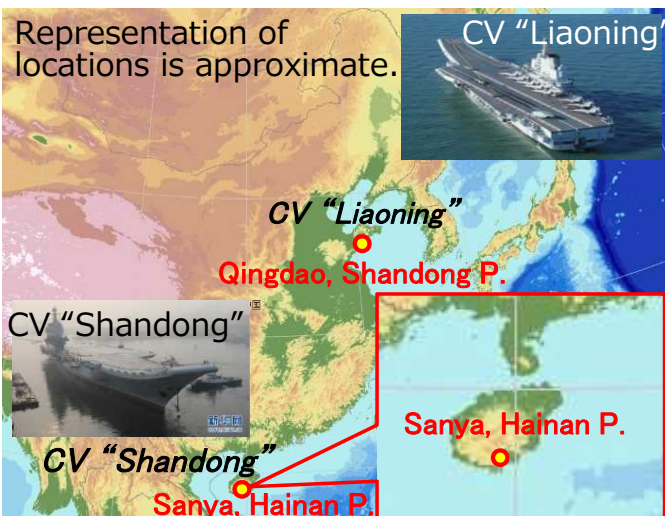
(Ref.) IHS Jane’s Online,
Media reports, etc.

- In Nov. 2013, the construction of **the first indigenous CV** started in Dalian, Liaoning Prov.
- After May 2018, the CV conducted sea trials near Dalian. The CV passed through Taiwan Strait in Nov. 2019.
- On Dec. 17th 2019, the CV was named “**PLA Naval Ship Shandong**” at the ceremony in Sanya, Hainan Prov.
- Reportedly CV “Shandong” is expected to be deployed in Sanya, and will operate in the South China Sea
- The second indigenous CV is under construction, and the shipyard is reportedly in Shanghai.

Sanya, Hainan Province

Specification of CV 17 “Shandong”

※ Ref. CV 16 “Liaoning” (Source: IHS Jane’s Online)



Length × Width	315m × 37m (Max. Width of the Flight Deck: 70m)
Displacement	66,000t (Full)
Aircraft	Fighter: J-15 × 36 AEW&C, EW, Helicopter Pointed out to accommodate approx. 40~50 aircraft in total
Take-off	Ski-jump
Power	Steam powered

(Source: IHS Jane’s Online, etc.)

Length × Width	304.5m × 37m (Max. Width of the Flight Deck: 70m)
Displacement	59,439t (Full), (Standard: 46,637t)
Aircraft	Fighter: J-15 × 24, Helicopter × 12
Take-off	Ski-jump
Power	Steam powered, 30 knots
Armament	SAM: HHQ-10 (18-cell) × 4 Gun: 30mm Type 1130 × 4 etc.

- Jul. 2011, China MOD for the first time published its plan to repair a second-hand CV.
- Sep. 2012, the CV, named as “Liaoning,” entered commission (Qingdao, Shandong Province)
- Nov. 2013, CV “Liaoning” conducted a sea trial in the South China Sea for the first time.

(Reported Performance of CV “Shandong”)

- CV “Shandong” utilizes the space under the front part of the flight deck for aircraft, while CV “Liaoning” utilizes the space for SSMs, resulting in more accommodation of aircraft.
- CV “Shandong” has more operational capability with phased-array radar.

(Deployment Reported by China State-Media)

- The commission of CV “Shandong” in Sanya accounts for China’s first deployment of a CV in the South China Sea. The deployment will play an important role in peace and stability in the South China Sea.

(Source: People’s Daily Net (Dec. 18th 2019), etc.)

Commander and Political Commissar



Commander of CV “Shandong”
LAI Yijuun, Senior Colonel



Political Commissar of CV “Shandong”
• PANG Jianhong, Senior Colonel

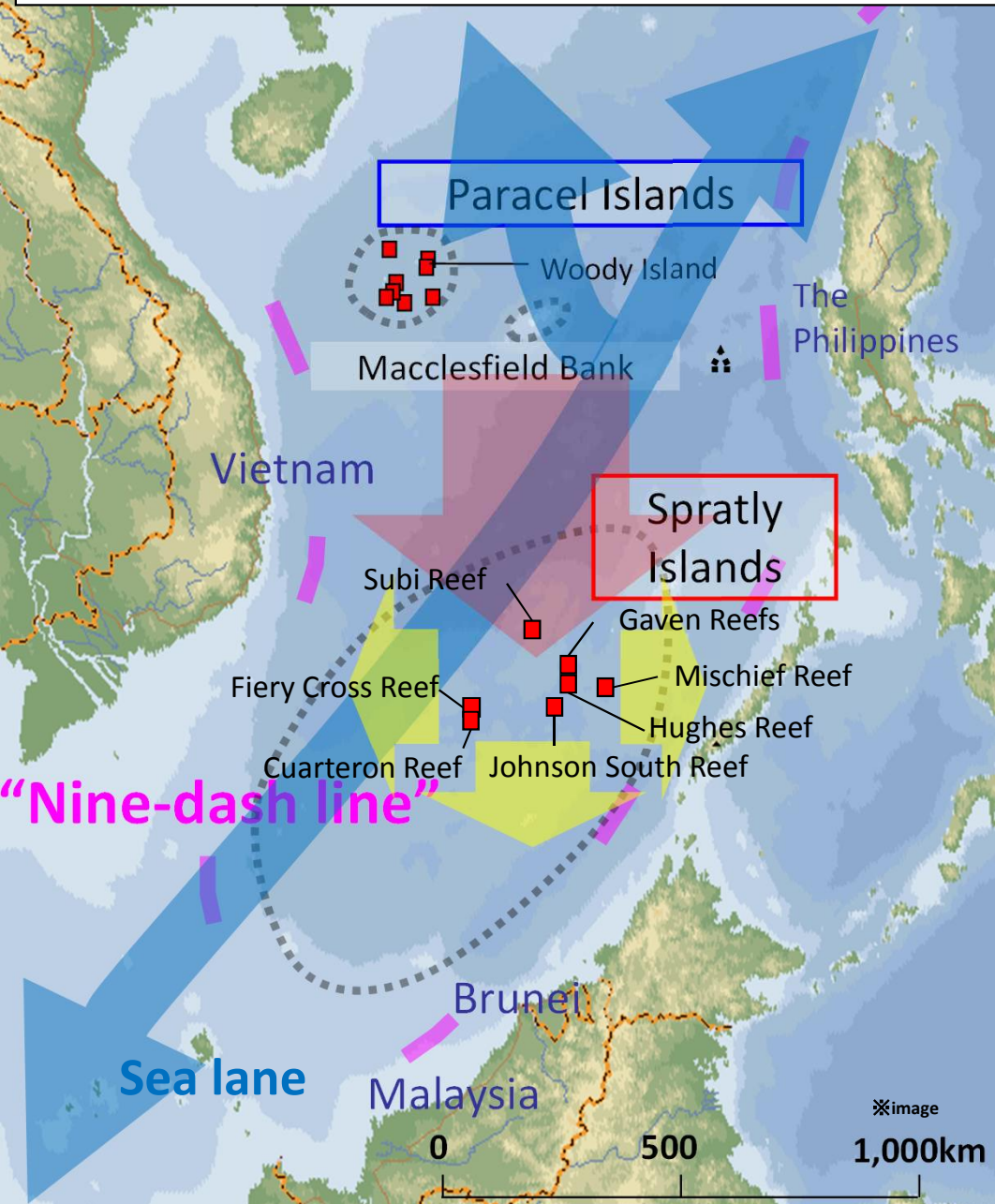
※ Attendance of the Commission Ceremony: Representatives from related departments of central and state agencies, Central Military Commission, PLA Southern Theater, PLA Navy, Hainan Province and construction companies.

South China Sea

3. Security Implications by China's Militarization in the Spratly Islands

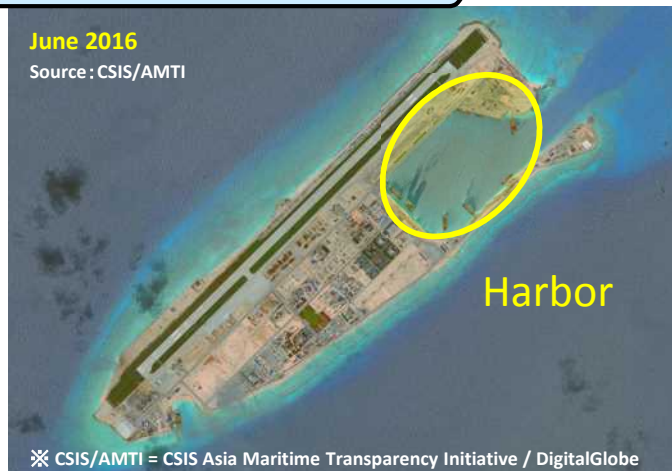
3-1 Possible Impact of Building Port Facilities in the Spratly Islands

Building port facilities in the SCS **could dramatically improve China's ISR and other mission capabilities in the SCS**



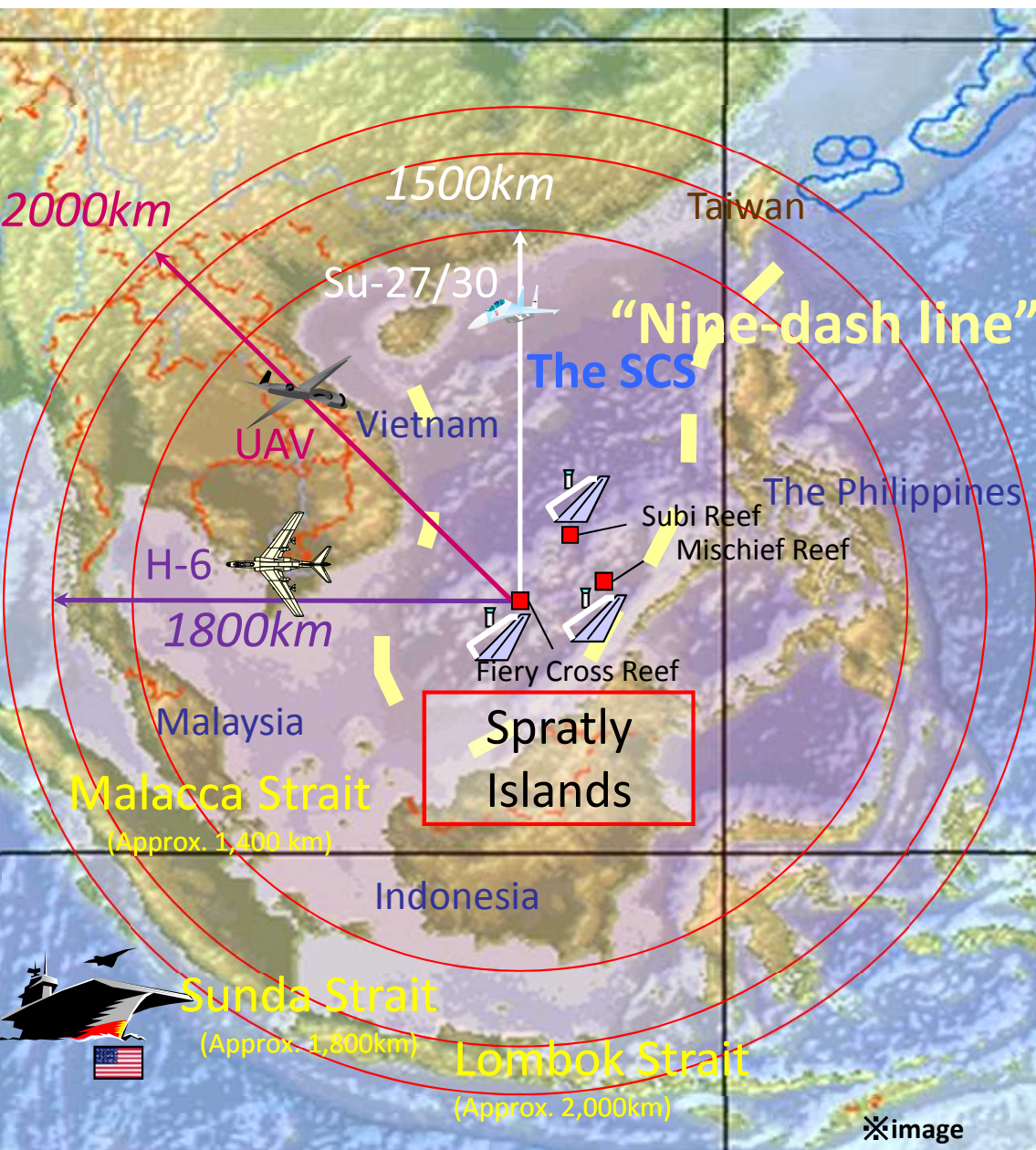
- Building port facilities of certain size capable of berthing, resupply and maintenance would enable China to **maintain more robust naval and maritime law enforcement presence** in the entire SCS
- This development would **dramatically improve China's ISR and other mission capabilities** in the central and southern portions of the SCS
- Some observers refer to **considerable impacts on coastal states in the SCS as well as on the sea lane**

E.g., Fiery Cross Reef



3-2 Possible Impact of Building Runways in the Spratly Islands

Runway construction on the Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reefs (incl. 3,000m-class) would lead to **increase in China's air force presence in the SCS**



- The three features with **runways and support facilities** would enable China to forward-deploy various aerial platforms (incl. fighters, bombers and UAVs)
- In general terms, its ramifications potentially include:
 - (1) China's improved **air power-projection capability** over the entire SCS (especially, significant **improvement in China's ISR and other mission capabilities** in the central and southern portion of the SCS);
 - (2) **enhanced China's air superiority** over the SCS; and
 - (3) **improved "Anti-Access/Area-Denial" capabilities** against the U.S. military presence and its intervention to contingencies; and
- It could lead to possible declaration of an **"SCS Air Defense Identification Zone"** by China in the future
[See.] "Regarding when to declare such a zone [SCS ADIZ], it will depend on whether China is facing security threats from the air, and what the level of the air safety threat." (China Defense Ministry, June 2016)

South China Sea

4. Situations in Other Related Countries

4-1 Comparison of Navy/Air Force Capabilities (China & the Philippines/Vietnam/Malaysia)

Although main coastal states in the SCS strive to enhance their navy/air force capabilities, a vast gap with China remains both qualitatively and quantitatively



	China	Vietnam	Malaysia	The Philippines
Warship	748 (1,97.3 thous. ton)	159 (8.1 thous. ton)	77 (8.3 thous. ton)	121 (6.3 thous. ton)
Submarine	Shang-class (6,100t) x 6 Yuan-class (3,600t) x 17 Kilo-class (3,100t) x 12 etc.	Kilo-class (3,100t) x 6 Yugo-class (100t) x 2	Scorpene-class (1,800t) x 2	Null
Destroyer/ Frigate etc.	Luyang III-class DDG (6,000t) x 11 Jiankai II-class FFG (3,600t) x 29 etc.	Gepard-class FFG (1,600t) x 4 Petya-class FFL (1,000t) x 5	Lekiu-class FF (1,800t) x 2 Kasturi-class Corvette (1,800t) x 2 etc.	Hamilton-class FF (2,700t) x 3 Auk-class Corvette (1,100t) x 2 etc.
Combat Aircraft	3,015 (incl. 4 th /5 th generation fighter x 1,080)	72 (incl. 4 th generation fighter x 46)	69 (incl. 4 th generation fighter x 36)	43 (incl. 4 th generation fighter x 12)
Fighter	J-10 x 468 Su-27/J-11 x 349 Su-30 x 97 etc.	Su-30MK2 x 35 Su-27 x 11 Su-22 x 26 etc.	Su-30MKM x 18 F/A-18 x 8 etc.	FA-50PH x 12
Patrol aircraft (fixed-wing) etc.	KJ-2000AEW&C x 4 KJ-500AEW&C x 11 etc.	Null	Null	F-27-200MPAx 1 N-22SLx 1 etc.
Marines etc.	Approx. 25,000 (PLA Marine Corps)	Approx. 27,000	Null	Approx. 8,300
Patrol and coastal combatants etc.	523+ (China Coast Guard) ≥1,500t x 87※ 500≤, <1,500t x 33 250≤, <500t x 103 etc. ※: including 10,000t-class CCG vessels, the largest class in the world	69+ (Coast Guard) ≥1,500t x 4 <1,500t x 15 Patrol aircraft x 3 etc.	127 (Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency) ≥1,500t x 4 250≤, <500t x 3 Patrol aircraft x 2 Air-sea rescue helicopter x 6 etc.	86 (Coast Guard) ≤1,500 x 7 etc.

(Sources: Military Balance 2020, Jane's Fighting Ships 2019-2020, Jane's online etc.)

4-2 Development Trends of Other Countries/Regions in the SCS

Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan in the 80s/90s **built runways (600-1,200m)** on the land features over which they have *de facto* control. All of them have done facility maintenance and development. Reports suggest that **Vietnam has recently conducted reclamation work**.

Structures on features etc.

- : China's
- ★ : Taiwan's
- : Vietnam's
- ▲ : the Philippines'
- ◆ : Malaysia's
- ※ Thin dash lines show 200 NM from coasts geographically

Sand Cay (V)

These satellite photos indicate the reclamation area was approx. 37,190 m²

Sin Cowe Island (V)

These satellite photos indicate the reclamation area was approx. 105,501 m²

Paracel Islands

Thitu Island (P)

Approx. 1,200m runway

* CSIS/AMTI points out that Vietnam reclaimed 486,000 square meters in 10 features in total in 2 years since 2014.

In 2011, a plan to repair the runway announced; in January 2016, a plan to implement a civilian aircraft tracking system

Itu Aba Island (T)

Approx. 1,200m runway

Airfield infrastructure expanded

Harbor expansion completed in Dec. 2015

May 2016

Sources: CSIS/AMTI, IHS Jane's

A lighthouse (height: 12.7m) completed in October 2015; harbor expansion completed in December 2015, in which 3,000t-class vessels can berth

West London Reef (V)

These satellite photos indicate the reclamation area was approx. 285,303 m²

Spratly Island (V)

These satellite photos indicate the reclamation area was approx. 150,502 m²; runway extended to 1,000m-class; large hangers built

Spratly Islands

Swallow Reef (M)

Approx. 1,400m runway

Runway extended in 2003 (from 1,000m to 1,400m)

March 2013
Source: CSIS/AMTI

Source: CSIS/AMTI
August 2016

February 2006
Source: CSIS/AMTI

September 2016
Source: CSIS/AMTI

West Reef
Approx. 494m
Source: CSIS/AMTI
April 2016

Spratly Island
Approx. 600m runway
May 2014

Source: CSIS/AMTI
November 2016

※ image

(Sources: CSIS/AMTI, media reports)

※CSIS/AMTI = CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative / DigitalGlobe

4-3 The abstract of the Award of the SCS Arbitration (1)

Abstract

- On 12th July 2016, the Tribunal, in the South China Sea Arbitration, issued an Award. The Tribunal concluded that China's 'nine-dash line' is invalid, that none of the features in the Spratly Islands are fully entitled islands, which is capable of generating extended maritime zones, that China had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights, and that China had caused severe harm to marine environment, resulting in agreement with the majority of Philippines' claims.
- "The award shall be final," and "shall be complied with by the parties to the dispute."

Historic Rights and the 'Nine-Dash Line'

- The Tribunal concluded that historical navigation and fishing by China in the waters of the South China Sea represented the exercise of high seas freedoms, rather than a historic right, and that there was no evidence that China had historically exercised exclusive control over the waters of the South China Sea or prevented other States from exploiting their resources.
- The Tribunal concluded that there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the 'nine-dash line.'

4-3 The abstract of the Award of the SCS Arbitration (2)

Status of Features

- Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, “rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.” The Tribunal concluded that this provision depends upon the objective capacity of a feature, in its natural condition, to sustain either a stable community of people or economic activity that is not dependent on outside resources.
- The Tribunal concluded that Scarborough Shoal, Johnson Reef, Cuarteron Reef, Fiery Cross Reef, Gaven Reef (North) and McKennan Reef are high-tide features and that Subi Reef, Hughes Reef, Mischief Reef, and Second Thomas Shoal were submerged at high tide in their natural condition.
- The Tribunal concluded that all of the high-tide features in the Spratly Islands (including, for example, Itu Aba, Thitu, West York Island, Spratly Island, North-East Cay, South-West Cay) are legally “rocks” that do not generate an exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

Lawfulness of Chinese Actions / Harm to Marine Environment

- The Tribunal found that China had violated the Philippines’ sovereign rights in its exclusive economic zone by such means as interfering with Philippine fishing and petroleum exploration and constructing artificial islands. The Tribunal also held that China had interfered with traditional fishing rights of fishermen from the Philippines at Scarborough Shoal in restricting access. The Tribunal further held that Chinese law enforcement vessels had unlawfully created a serious risk of collision when they physically obstructed Philippine vessels.
- The Tribunal found that China’s recent large scale land reclamation and construction of artificial islands at seven features in the Spratly Islands has caused severe harm to the coral reef environment. The Tribunal found, however, that China’s recent large-scale land reclamation and construction of artificial islands was incompatible with the obligations on a State during dispute resolution proceedings

* The Tribunal found that it lacked jurisdiction to consider the implications of a stand-off between Philippine and China at Second Thomas Shoal.

4-4 Trends in China and reactions of other countries and region since the COVID-19 outbreak(1)

① In February 2020, a Chinese naval vessel directed radar at a Philippine naval vessel.

[Others' Response] [The Philippines](#) lodged diplomatic protest against China.

② In April 2020, a Vietnamese fishing boat collided with a Chinese Coastguard vessel and sank in the waters of the Paracel Islands.

[Others' Response] [Vietnam](#) lodged diplomatic protest against China. [The Philippines](#) also expressed concerns. (The Philippines experienced a similar case in June 2019.)

③ In April 2020, the "Liaoning" aircraft carrier group passed through the Miyako Strait, Bashi Channel and entered the South China Sea.

[Others' Response] [Taiwan's](#) Ministry of National Defense announced the above.

④ In April 2020, China announced the new establishment of "Xisha and Nansha Districts" in the South China Sea.

[Others' Response] A spokesperson of the [Vietnam's](#) Foreign Ministry remarked that China's acts violate Vietnam's sovereignty, and [the Philippines](#) protested as well.

⑤ In April 2020, a Chinese survey ship "Haiyang Dizhi 8" operated near the Malaysian drillship "West Capella." (Image 1)

[Others' Response] While avoiding explicit protests, [Malaysia's](#) Foreign Minister remarked that the presence of warships and other naval vessels in the South China Sea could increase tensions and undermine peace, security and stability.

⑥ From July 1 to 5, 2020, PLA Navy conducted military exercise near the Paracel Islands. (Advance notice on June 28) (Image 2)

[Others' Response] A spokesperson of the [Vietnam's](#) Foreign Ministry remarked that China's drill violated Vietnam's sovereignty, and [the Philippine's](#) Foreign Minister uploaded a video statement showing concerns.

[The U.S.] The U.S. DoD expressed concern that China's military exercise would destabilize the situation in the South China Sea.

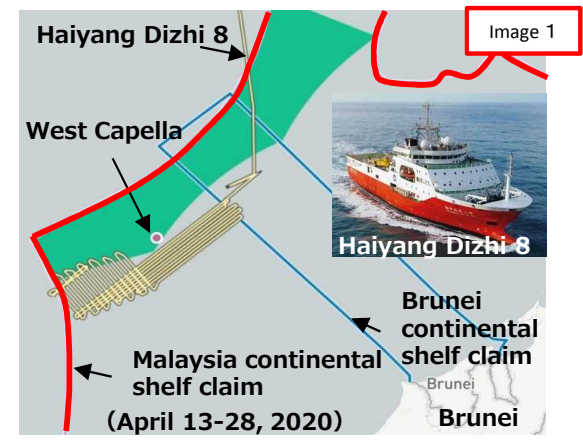
⑦ In August 2020, PLA conducted military exercise in the South China Sea. (According to reports, four medium-range ballistic missiles launched)

[Others' Response]] A spokesperson of the [Vietnam's](#) Foreign Ministry remarked "China's drill violates Vietnam's sovereignty in the Paracel Islands."

[The U.S.] [The U.S. DoD](#) expressed concern about the Chinese military exercise and the launch of ballistic missiles in the South China Sea.

⑧ In September 2020, PLA noticed military exercise in the South China Sea.

[The U.S. DoS](#) released a press statement to the effect that despite the Xi's promise five years ago, China uses militarized outposts as platforms of coercion.





(Sources: CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative)



【 Details of Exercise (環球時報 (2020.7.4)) 】

<Sea Areas in the South China Sea>

- [Type 052D missile destroyer "Hohhot" \(Luyang III-class\)](#) locked on to the "enemy ship" and succeeded in sinking it by the rapid target conversion and tracking method of the main gun system.
- [Type 054A frigate "Yulin" \(Jiangkai II-class\)](#) fired several jamming rounds at the fast-approaching target and evaded "missile" by Yulin's covering.

	7,500 tons (full load) 157.0 × 17.0 × 6.0m 30 knot 13 vessels		3,963 tons (full load) 134.0 × 16.0 × 5.0m 27 knot 29 vessels
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Luyang III-class destroyer

Jiangkai II-class frigate

4-4 Trends in China and reactions of the U.S. and Australia since the COVID-19 outbreak(2)

- China continues to intensify activities in the South China Sea after the COVID-19 outbreak.
- On July 13, 2020, the U.S. announced the statement of Secretary of State “U.S. Position on Maritime Claims in the South China Sea.”
- On July 26, 2020, Australia backed the U.S. by sending a letter to the UN denying China’s sovereignty claims in the South China Sea.

The U.S.



US Secretary of State,
Pompeo

- Beijing’s claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful.
- The U.S. shares deep and abiding interests of the peace and stability, freedom of the seas in a manner consistent with international law, the unimpeded flow of commerce, and opposition to using coercion or force to settle disputes with our allies and partners. These shared interests have come under unprecedented threat from the People’s Republic of China (PRC).
- Beijing uses intimidation to undermine the sovereign rights of Southeast Asian coastal states in the South China Sea, bully them out of offshore resources, assert unilateral dominion, and replace international law with “might makes right.”
- The PRC has no legal grounds to unilaterally impose its will on the region. In a unanimous decision on July 12, 2016, an Arbitral Tribunal rejected the PRC’s maritime claims as having no basis in international law.
- The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire. America stands with our Southeast Asian allies and partners in protecting their sovereign rights to offshore resources, consistent with their rights and obligations under international law. We stand with the international community in defense of freedom of the seas and respect for sovereignty and reject any push to impose “might makes right” in the South China Sea or the wider region.

Australia



Australia Prime Minister,
Morrison

- The Australian Government rejects any claims by China that are inconsistent with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Australia rejects China’s claim to ‘historic rights’ or ‘maritime rights and interests’ as established in the Tong course of historical practice’ in the South China Sea. The Tribunal in the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Award found these claims to be inconsistent with UNCLOS and, to the extent of that inconsistency, invalid.
- The Australian Government does not accept China’s assertion in its note of 17 April 2020 that its sovereignty claims over the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands are ‘widely recognized by the international community.’

4-5 Efforts of the U.S. and other countries in the SCS

(Ref.) Media reports

PLA and Maritime Law Enforcement Forces (MLEFs):

- **improve ISR and other mission capabilities** with port and runway construction and with sustained deployment of vessels and aircraft in the SCS
- **improve A2/AD capabilities** against U.S. intervention

The U.S. concerns:

- inhibition of freedom of navigation in the SLOC
- constraints of the U.S. military activities
- deterioration of security environment in the entire region

⇒ The U.S. requires China to comply with international norms, and criticizes China's unilateral and assertive actions in the SCS.

The U.S. strengthens relations with the SCS neighboring countries

- In June 2019, USDOD published Indo-Pacific Strategy Report:
The report states its **policies to strengthen the alliance with the Philippines and to prioritize new relationship with Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia locating strategically key SLOC.**
 - with the Philippines: Cooperation on capacity building in various fields such as maritime security and ISR
 - with Vietnam: USDOD is building Strategic Partnership with Vietnam that is based on common interests and principles. The US-Vietnam defense relationship has grown dramatically over the past several years.
 - with Indonesia: the Strategic Partnership focuses on six areas for advancing defense cooperation such as maritime security and domain awareness.
 - with Malaysia: USDOD helps Malaysia in fields such as improvement of its MDA by providing sensors on existing platforms.

The U.S. expands its military presence

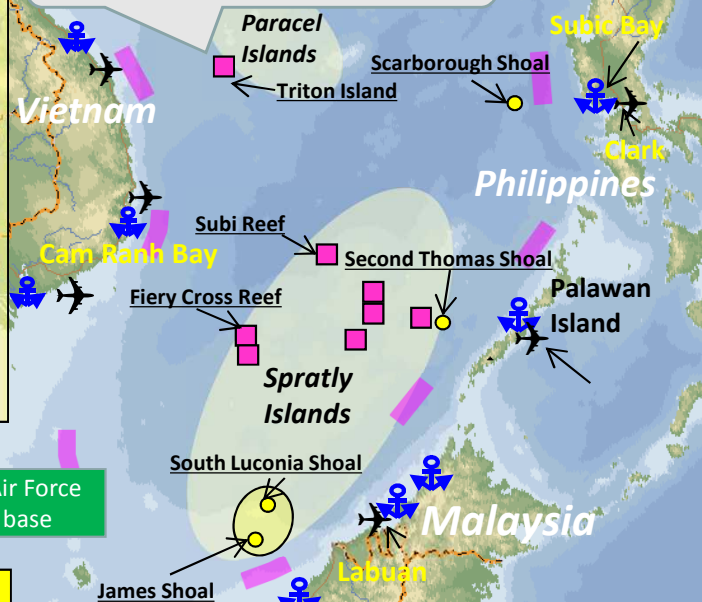
- Expanding the U.S. military presence by increasing port calls of naval vessels, reinforcing ISR activities, conducting various joint military trainings, strengthening unit deployment (of vessels such as aircraft carrier, and aircraft) etc.
 - Making the **enhancement of maritime domain awareness (MDA)** the urgent task in the SCS, the U.S. forces themselves **actively conduct ISR activities**
 - ⇒ The U.S. expects the role of allies such as Japan and Australia (Australia has already conducted operations around the SCS using Butterworth (in Malaysia) as a base)
 - The U.S. deploys littoral combat ships (LCS) in Singapore (since April 2013) and it also deployed maritime patrol aircraft P-8 (December 2015) in Singapore and aircraft such as attack aircraft and electronic-warfare aircraft in the Philippines (since March 2016).
- The U.S. conducts "Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs)" in order to counter excessive maritime claims
 - "We will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, and demonstrate resolve through operational presence in the South China Sea and beyond." (Defense Secretary Mattis [June 2017] etc.)

U.S.-Vietnam Relations

- In December 2013, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry expressed **18-million-dollar support** for Vietnam **in the field of maritime security** (→ purchase of 4 patrol boats)
- In November 2015, the U.S. expressed **approximately 40-million-dollar support** for Vietnam in the next two years
- In May 2016, the U.S. announced it was **fully lifting the arms embargo to Vietnam**.
- In August 2017, **port call by one of the U.S. CVs in 2018** was agreed.
- In March 2018, a **US carrier made a port-call at Da Nang** (First time after Vietnam War)
- In March 2019, a **US carrier made a port-call at Da Nang** (Second time since March 2018)
- In November 2019, **Secretary of Defense Esper visited Vietnam**, expressing the grant of a patrol ship

[Major Military Base] Air Base, Naval Base etc.
 ■ : Features on which China constructs structures
 ● : Features where China's vessels allegedly obstructed other ships

In January 2016 and July 2017, U.S. Navy allegedly conducted the "Freedom of Navigation Operation," sailing within 12NM of the Triton Island. In October 2016 and October 2017, sailing near the Paracel Islands.



Australian Air Force uses as a base

U.S.-Philippines Relations

- In December 2013, the U.S. expressed **40-million-dollar support** for the Philippines **in order to strengthen its maritime security and its anti-terrorism capability**
- In April 2014, the U.S. and the Philippines signed **the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA)** (*Its constitutionality is currently on trial at the Philippine Supreme Court)
⇒ The EDCA will make it possible for the U.S. forces to **deploy rotationally to military bases in the Philippines**
- In November 2015, U.S. President Obama expressed **79-million-dollar support** as well as **the grant of one U.S. Coast Guard Cutter and one research vessel** for the Philippines
- In March 2016, the U.S. and the Philippines agreed on **5 base locations** under EDCA.
- In September 2017, the Chief of Staff of the Philippines announced that **the U.S. would begin facilities construction at all of the five EDCA base locations**.
- In March 2019, US Secretary of State Pompeo stated that any armed attack on any Philippine forces, aircraft, or public vessels in the SCS would trigger mutual defense obligations.
- In February 2020, Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs Locsin notified the termination of VFA with the U.S. (In June 2020, the termination was suspended)

4-6 U.S. “Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP)”

(Ref.) U.S. DoD, U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services etc.

1. Characterization of the “FONOP”

- “FONOP” is one of the means for carrying out “Freedom of Navigation (FON) Program”

FON Program is characterized as below:

Ends: In order to preserve the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea and airspace guaranteed to all states under international law by demonstrating a non-acquiescence to excessive maritime claims asserted by coastal states

Ways: (1) Operational activities by U.S. military forces / DoD (i.e., “FONOP”)

(2) Consultations and representations by U.S. DoS

History: The FON Program has been continuously carried out since 1979.

4-6 U.S. “Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP)”

2. Manner of “FONOP” [news report etc.]

(Ref.) U.S. DoD, U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services etc.

- In May 2015, the U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said: “[The U.S. will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows.](#)”
- According to the U.S. DoD “Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy” (August 2015), “U.S. PACOM maintains a robust shaping presence [in and around the SCS](#), with [activities ranging from training and exercises with allies and partners to port calls to FONOPs and other routine operations](#)” and “[\[a\]s part of the Department’s routine presence activities, the U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Coast Guard conduct FONOPs.](#)”
- [In October 2015, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Subi Reef](#), the Spratly Islands (USS Lassen).
- In November 2015, PACOM commander Harry Harris said that [the U.S. has been, and will be, conducting “FONOPs” in the SCS.](#)
- [In January 2016, the U.S. conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Triton Island](#), the Paracel Islands (USS Curtis Wilbur). The U.S. Office of Secretary of Defense stated: “This operation was about challenging excessive maritime claims that restrict the rights and freedoms of the U.S. and other, [not about territorial claims to land features](#). The U.S. takes no position on competing sovereignty claims between the parties to naturally-formed land features in the SCS.”
- [In May 2016, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Fiery Cross Reef](#) (USS William P. Lawrence).
- [In October 2016, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Decatur).
- [In May 2017, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Mischief Reef](#) (USS Dewey).
- [In July 2017, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Triton Island](#), the Paracel Islands (USS Stetham).
- [In August 2017, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Mischief Reef](#) (USS John S. McCain).
- [In October 2017, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Chafee).
- [In January 2018, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Scarborough Shoal](#) (USS Hopper).
- [In March 2018, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Mischief Reef](#) (USS Mustin).
- [In May 2018, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Higgins and Antietam).
- [In September 2018, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Gaven Reef and Johnson South Reef](#), the Spratly Islands (USS Decatur).
- [In November 2018, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Chancellorsville).
- [In January 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Tree, Lincoln and Woody Island](#), the Spratly Islands (USS McCampbell).
- [In February 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Mischief Reef](#) (USS Spruance and Preble).
- [In May 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Gaven and Johnson South Reefs](#) (USS Preble and Chung-Hoon).
- [In May 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Scarborough Shoal](#) (USS Preble).
- [In August 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Fiery Cross Reef and the Mischief Reef](#) (USS Wayne E Meyer).
- [In September 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Wayne E Meyer).
- [In November 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Mischief Reef](#) (USS Gabrielle Giffords).
- [In November 2019, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Wayne E Meyer).
- [In January 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near Fiery Cross Reef](#) (USS Montgomery).
- [In March 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS McCampbell).
- [In April 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Barry).
- [In April 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Gaven Reef](#) (USS Bunker Hill).
- [In May 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Mustin).
- [In July 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” within 12NM of the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Ralph Johnson).
- [In August 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS Mustin).
- [In October 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS John S. McCain).
- [In December 2020, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Spratly Islands](#) (USS John S. McCain).
- [In February 2021, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Paracel Islands](#) (USS John S. McCain).
- [In February 2021, the U.S. Navy conducted the “FONOP” near the Spratly Islands](#) (USS Russell).