

A day after rejecting South China Sea ruling, Taiwan sends patrol ship to disputed region

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Taipei: A day after rejecting the ruling by an international tribunal denying China's rights over South China Sea, Taiwan on Wednesday sent a warship to patrol the disputed region.

Taiwan's President aboard a Navy ship before it sets out to South China Sea

Taiwan's government has rejected the ruling by arbitral tribunal as "completely unacceptable" and said it is not legally binding since the arbitral tribunal did not formally invite Taipei to participate in its proceedings or solicit its views.

Although rivals, self-ruled Taiwan and China share the same territorial claims, pitting them against other claimants, chiefly the Philippines and Vietnam. The UN arbitration tribunal ruled in favor of the Philippines and said that the biggest feature in the Spratly Islands – Taiwanese-controlled Taiping or Itu Aba – is not an island but a rock, and therefore not entitled to more than 12 nautical miles of territorial waters.

On Wednesday, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen said that the ruling "seriously damaged" Taiwan's rights.

In remarks to navy sailors aboard a frigate before it left on a South China Sea patrol, she said: "This ship represents the Republic of China (Taiwan). The uniform you are wearing represents the expectations of the people. The mission of this trip is to show the Taiwanese people's determination to defend the country's interests."

"The South China Sea ruling, especially the categorisation of Taiping island, has severely jeopardised our country's rights in the South China Sea islands and their relevant waters," Tsai told soldiers on the deck of ship.

"This patrol mission will show Taiwanese people's determination to defend their country's rights," she said, before disembarking from the warship ahead of its departure.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said it would continue to send planes and ships to the South China Sea on patrol missions and to defend Taiwan's territory and sovereignty.

China today once again brushed aside the UN tribunal verdict on the disputed South China Sea saying that it should be "dumped into garbage".

Chinese Defence Minister General Chang Wanquan said China will not accept any proposition or action based on the decision by the arbitral tribunal and that it has the right to declare a unilateral air-defence zone over the strategic South China Sea.

Yesterday, an international arbitration tribunal's ruled against China's claims over the South China Sea, dismissing it as "null and void." The arbitration tribunal in The Hague backed the Philippines which had approached the court in 2013.

"There was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the 'nine-dash line'," the Permanent Court of Arbitration said, referring to a demarcation line on a 1947 map of the sea.

Beijing, however, said that it will not accept nor recognise the verdict which it described as having "no binding force".

"The Republic of China solemnly declares that the award is null and void and has no binding force. China neither

accepts nor recognizes it," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said its reaction to the ruling.

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