



Maritime Militia: The Unofficial Maritime Agency



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What is the Maritime Militia?

- A military force raised from civilian mariners and coastal populations to support state objectives at sea
 - Not released from production
 - Organize in military formations
 - Receive military training
- Drawn from port areas with large fishing, shipbuilding, or shipping industries where experienced mariners or craftsmen provide a ready pool of recruits
 - Largely concentrated amongst the fishing fleets
- Tasked with a wide array of missions from peacetime coercion of rivals to wartime support of navies

Limited Scope of Examination

- Grassroots militia forces require language-capable examination
 - Difficult for any single researcher to fully examine across linguistic boundaries
- Significant Maritime Militia activity occurring in South China Sea
 - Persistent territorial disputes
 - Steady overall expansion of paramilitary forces

Major Sources of Maritime Militia

- Maritime Militia used to advance territorial claims in South China Sea
 - Defending maritime claims and occupied features
 - Aggression against perceived incursions by foreign vessels

China



Vietnam

- Both have rich traditions of People's War and using militia to defend territory
 - The militia are official components of their armed forces
 - Similarly organized
 - Similarly tasked

High Level Support for Maritime Militia



April 2013: Chinese President Xi Jinping visits Tanmen Maritime Militia company on the first anniversary of the Scarborough Shoal Incident. Hainan's Maritime Militia would later mobilize to defend the HYSY 981 oil rig



July 2014: Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang visits Danang fishermen, presenting gifts to the owner of fishing vessel DNa 90152, which was rammed and sunk by Chinese Hainanese Maritime Militia near the HYSY 981 oil rig

China's Maritime Militia

- Great mobilization potential – world's largest fishing fleet – approx. 187,211 marine fishing vessels by end of 2015
- New emphasis on Maritime Militia in nationwide reserves building, as contained within the 13th Five Year Plan
 - Local growth in Maritime Militia forces evident



National Defense News, Jan 2016: Graphic depicting recent growth in Beihai City's Maritime Militia in quantity and specialization

Integrating Three Sea Forces

Sovremenny-class Destroyer
Hangzhou (136)

Banner reads “Ningbo City Xiangshan County Militia
Near-Seas Reconnaissance Detachment”



Fisheries Law Enforcement

“A component of China’s ocean defense armed forces, [that enjoy] low sensitivity and great leeway in maritime rights protection actions”
-Zhoushan Garrison Commander Zeng Pengxiang

Maritime Rights Protection in the South China Sea



Sanya based Maritime Militia harassed the USNS *Impeccable* in 2009

Gulf of Tonkin



South Sea Fleet HQ in Zhanjiang

Hainan Province

Sanya

Tanmen



Tanmen Maritime Militia Company present during April 2012 Scarborough Shoal Incident



South China Sea



Sansha

Maritime Militia mobilized to defend CNOOC HYSY-981 oil rig in May 2014

Paracel Islands

Command and supply ships involved in Maritime Militia missions.
Ex: Blockade of Second Thomas Shoal in Feb. 2014



中新

Sansha City Maritime Militia

Liberation Army Daily, 30 July 2015:
Militia Outpost and People's Armed Forces
Department (PAFD) on Tree Island –
Military institutions established to manage
and support militia operations



Macao Daily, 28 July 2016:
Drummond Island also set up a
PAFD and militia outpost



Sansha Garrison established its
first Maritime Militia company on
July 2013

Sansha City Government, 22 July 2015:
Maritime Militia man Sansha City's
Naval-Coast Guard-Maritime Militia
Joint Defense Command Center



State Run Militia Fishing Fleet

Sansha City Fisheries Development Co. Ltd. was established in February 2015

四沙群岛

Hainan Government Document #532238, 2015: “84 militia steel-hulled fishing vessels” to be delivered to the Sansha City state-owned fishing company



16

Hainan Government Website, 18 June 2016: Fleet of vessels designated “Qiong Sansha Yu” moored at Yazhou Central Fishing Port



Sansha PLA Garrison CDR Cai Xihong wrote in 2015 that Sansha City Fishery Development Co. Ltd. is a Maritime Militia organization

附件 1: 三沙市渔业发展有限公司招录职位表

招录部门	招录职位	招录人数 (人)	户籍	性别	年龄	学历要求	专业要求 / 证书要求	工作经验	薪酬待遇
			全国, 海南籍优		18-45岁	高中以上			薪酬包括工资和出海补助, 合计约17万/年。按照海南省国资委同类企业标准计
电机员		12	全国, 海南籍优	男	18-45岁	初中以上	不限	渔民退伍兵优先	薪酬包括工资和出海补助, 合计约9万/年。按照海南省国资委同类企业标准计

Veteran's preferences & salaried positions.
Job recruitment table for Sansha City Fisheries Development Co. Ltd. gives hiring priority to PLA veterans for all positions aboard the vessels

110°

111°

112°

113°

16

17

Training Underway



(Above) *Takungpao*: Sansha Maritime Militia coordinate with Maritime Safety Administration in a 14 July 2016 exercise, *Qionsanshayu* 00111 and *Qionsanshayu* 00310.

(Left) *National Defense*, No. 6, 2015: This exercise featured Sansha Maritime Militia loading 32-kg crates labeled “light weapons.”

Training With the PLAN



21 September 2016: Guangdong Province, Zhanjiang City, Xiashan District Maritime Militia train with PLA Navy South Sea Fleet for vessel repair and logistic support.

This unit has undergone three periods of development over the years:

Coastal Militia Company



Maritime Militia Company



Far Seas Militia Squadron

“Using Civilians Against Civilians”

Numerous Chinese and Vietnamese Maritime Militia clashed near HYSY 981 oil rig from May to July 2014



National Defense, 2015:
Sansha Maritime Militia conduct a nighttime inspection of a vessel whose crew was deemed guilty of “rights infringement and illegal fishing”



“In most cases...our best approach is to use our fishing vessels against their fishing vessels”
-Senior Captain Li Jie (Naval Research Institute) during 2015 TV interview

Vietnam's Maritime Militia



- Fishing fleet comprised of numerous smaller wooden-hulled fishing vessels
- Initiatives to strengthen Maritime Militia

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Independence - Freedom - Happiness

Ha Noi, date 23 month 11 year

2009

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY -

Số: 43/2009/QH12

LAW

ON MILITIA AND SELF-DEFENSE FORCES

Pursuant to the 1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which was amended and supplemented under Resolution No. 51/2001/QH10;

The National Assembly promulgates the law on Militia and Self Defense Forces.

Chapter I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1. Scope of regulation

This Law provides for the obligation to join militia and self-defense forces, regulates the organization and operations of militia and self-defense forces, regulates the policies for militia and self-defense forces and state management responsibilities for militia and self-defense forces.

Article 2. Subjects of application

1. Vietnamese citizen, agencies and organizations
2. Foreign organizations and individuals residing in the territory of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam related to the organization and operation of militia and self-defense forces.

Article 3. Position and functions of militia and self-defense forces

Militia and self-defense forces are mass armed forces not detached from production and work and

Vietnam passed a law on its militia in 2009, providing a legal framework for the building of its militia, providing particular detail on regulations for the building of the “Marine Militia and Self-Defense Forces”

Training Efforts



People's Army Newspaper Online,
September 2016: Vietnamese
Maritime Militia from Haiphong's
marine shipping companies receive
live-fire training from naval staff



People's Army Newspaper Online, October
2015: Vietnamese **Marine Self Defense
Forces** receive live-fire training under
direction from the General Staff of the
Vietnam People's Army and in coordination
with the Navy

Recognizing Vessel Shortcomings



A Vietnamese fishing vessel rammed and sunk during clash near the HYSY 981 oil rig is towed back to Da Nang

July 2014: Vietnamese Prime Minister announces a disbursement of VND4.5 trillion (\$211.5 million) to help fishermen build larger offshore vessels

THE GOVERNMENT

THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence - Freedom - Happiness

No. 67/2014/ND-CP

Hanoi, July 7, 2014

DECREE

On a number of fisheries development policies

Pursuant to the December 15, 2001 Law on Organization of the Government;

Pursuant to the December 16, 2000 Law on Fisheries;

Pursuant to the November 26, 2000 Law on Fisheries;

Pursuant to the June 16, 2010 Law on Fisheries;

Pursuant to the June 16, 2010 Law on Fisheries;

Pursuant to the December 9, 2000 Law on Fisheries;

Amending and Supplementing a Number of Articles of the Law on Insurance Business;

Pursuant to the Enterprise Income Tax Law and the 2013 Law Amending and Supplementing a Number of Articles of the Law on Enterprise Income Tax; the Law on Value Added Tax and the 2013 Law Amending a Number of Articles of the Law on Value Added Tax; the Personal Income Tax Law and the 2013 Law Amending and Supplementing a Number of Articles of the Personal Income Tax Law; the Law on Tax Administration and the 2013 Law Amending and Supplementing a Number of

Government Decree 67/2014/ND-CP: Meant to implement policies for improved fisheries development, including preferential policies for boosting the construction of larger steel-hulled deep-sea fishing vessels

Others Resorting to Maritime Militia

- Philippines: Chief of the Northern Luzon Command announced in June 2016 intention to include the fishing community in the National Task Force's effort to assert rights over Scarborough Shoal
 - Fishermen reportedly reluctant to undertake this task
- Maritime Militia less effective if not backed up by naval or maritime law enforcement forces



(Left) *CNN*, July 2015: China Coast Guard personnel confront Filipino fishermen attempting to fish at Scarborough Shoal

Implications of Maritime Militia Presence

-Increased uncertainty in the actions or intent of regional states

Calibrated signals or just local activism?



Implications of Maritime Militia Presence

-Maritime Militia growth reflects increased recalcitrance

Expanding tool sets for reinforcing claims, not for resolving disputes

-Increasing frequency of confrontation risks sparking conflict

Flooding disputed waters with civilians

A single fishing vessel can cause a major international incident

-Island construction efforts in the Spratlys will likely support Maritime Militia operations

Militarization and Politicization of Fishing Fleets

- Mix of economic incentive and political glorification distorts regular balancing of profit and risk
- Assertion of party leadership, political education, and military training of fishermen makes an already dangerous profession even more hazardous
- Resulting suspicions harmful to freedom of navigation and safety of fishing industry



Hainan Daily, 7 December 2012: Hainan Provincial Party Secretary Luo Baoming visits Tanmen Township to inform them of the goals set forth by the CPC's 18th National Congress to develop marine resources, protect maritime sovereignty, and become a maritime power

How to Deal with Maritime Militia

- Pressure states that use Maritime Militia to disclose and identify such forces, and ensure proper distinction in order to protect innocent civilian vessels from mistaken identification as militia

Ex: *Liberation Army Daily*, 6 January 2014: “Putting on camouflage, they qualify as soldiers; taking off the camouflage, they become law-abiding fishermen”

- Expect Coast Guards and Maritime Militia to adhere to Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES)
 - No more good cop, bad cop

A Few Thoughts

- Explore paths of Mil-to-Mil communication with provincial military commands that manage Maritime Militia
- Contact Maritime Militia personnel directly
 - Potentially more risk-averse than regular military units
 - Language-capable communication to disincline further aggression or obstruction
- Open source researchers can do more to cast light on these forces
 - Provide necessary evidence for policy makers and the public to openly discuss

For More Information:

Detailed compendium on China's Maritime Militia can
be found at:

<http://www.andrewerickson.com/>