



East Asian Maritime Security
Monthly Column

Xi Jinping's "People's War at Sea"

March 31, 2026

Koichi SATO, Ph.D.
Professor, J.F. Oberlin University

Xi Jinping's "People's War at Sea"¹
Koichi SATO, Ph.D.
Professor, J.F. Oberlin University

Introduction

The New York Times reported that China had quietly mobilized thousands of fishing boats in December 2025 and January 2026 to form massive floating barriers of at least 200 miles long, showing a new level of coordination that could give Beijing more ways to impose control in contested East China Sea². In December, about 2000 Chinese vessels assembled in two long, parallel formations on Christmas Day in the East China Sea. Each stretched 290 miles long, forming a reverse L shape, ship-position data indicated.

In January, about 1,400 Chinese vessels congregated in the East China Sea. By January 11, they had assembled into a rectangle stretching more than 200 miles. The New York Times never reported that all the Chinese fishing boats were maritime militia vessels though some of them joined maritime militia activities in the past, and some of them belonged to militia fleets. Its animation of Automatic Identification System (AIS) showed the wake of each Chinese fishing boat, and they made a rectangle shape, as if they composed the long wall which would refuse Japan and the U. S, to approach Taiwan.

What is the objective of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government led by President Xi Jinping to utilize the maritime militia? The present writer would like to consider this theme by the history of the Chinese maritime policy.

1. The Definition of Chinese Maritime Militia and its Actual Appearance

The Chinese maritime militia was established under the influence of People's War theory of Chairman Mao Ze Dong³. Admiral Xiao Jing Guang, the first commander of the People's Liberation Army Navy tried to construct the modern navy with assistance of Soviet Russia, but Chairman Mao insisted on the fleets of small gunboats and torpedo boats⁴. China's maritime militia was established as an auxiliary force of maritime guerrilla warfare, and the by-product of Chairman Mao's People's War.

A Japanese defense specialist described the Chinese maritime militia as follows: Chinese maritime militia was organized by fishermen, residents of remote islands, shipping agents, maritime officials. They act in accordance with the international law, and wear the uniform with the mark of militia⁵. The present writer summarized the explanations of several Chinese military analysts: maritime militias are in charge of weapon operation, logistics, reconnaissance, civil engineering work, demonstration of the presence, escort, disturbance, and sabotage⁶.

The Chinese militias include the core militia: retired soldiers, military training graduates, and military training personnel under 28 years old, and ordinary militia: conscripts from 18 years old to 35 years old⁷. Actual number of maritime militias is not

known. Number of the maritime militias suggested by the Western scholars seem to be big, for example, a scholar suggested 750,000 in 1975, though the Chinese Military White Paper 2019 suggests total number of militias of all four military forces include army, navy, air force and rocket force, 1.41 million in Chapter 3⁸. A Chinese military general told the present writer that this figure included all the military forces and all of core and ordinary militias⁹. If so, the actual number of maritime militias seemed to be smaller.

A Japanese newspaper reported the number of Chinese maritime militias in 2016 was 300,000, and according to Professor James Kraska of U.S. Naval-War College, their size was 20,000 boats and several hundred thousand soldiers in 2020¹⁰. A Japanese government officer told the present writer that the number of Chinese maritime militias boats appeared in the East China Sea was approximately 120 in 2022, and the Philippine government official told at the press conference that the number of Chinese maritime militias boats appeared in the Philippine waters in the South China Sea was approximately 300 to 350 in 2025¹¹. Most of boats in the East China Sea were around 150 gross tons and 30 meters length, and most of boats in the South China Sea were around 550 tons displacement and 50 meters length¹².

The article of Dr. Zhang Hongzhou and Commodore Sam Bateman reported that “Chinese Government provided financial support to fishermen, and there are three major fishery subsidies: a fishing fuel subsidy; a subsidy for ship construction; and a special fishing fuel subsidy for fishing in the Spratly Islands. Between 2011 and 2015, the central government’s financial support to the marine fishery amounted to RMB 146 billion (US\$21.8 billion), nearly three times higher than during 2006-2010¹³.” The title of this article is “Fishing Militia,” and it suggested that the Chinese Government utilized financial support to mobilize Chinese fishermen under the government’s direction. A Chinese scholar told the present writer in 2019, “If a fisherman needs a fishing boat, the government constructs two fishing boats for him. These boats’ appearance was not different from the usual fishing boats, though they were attached ammunition storages.”¹⁴

Dr. Zhang Hongzhou stressed that Vietnam and the Philippines organized the maritime militias and deployed militia fishing boats in the South China Sea, too¹⁵. He said, “Chinese reports suggest that Vietnam’s fishing militia is now quite large, with thirteen fishing militia platoons helping over 3,000 fishermen from Danang operate in the waters of the Paracel Islands. In the case of the Philippines, armed fishing vessels have been operating in the disputed waters of the South China Sea for years¹⁶. Sometimes, pirates posed as fishermen and in other cases, law enforcement officials have been disguised as fishermen.”

2. Encounters of the Chinese Maritime Militias with the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) and the U. S. Navy

The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) patrol vessels encountered the 137 Chinese fishing boats with maritime militias in the sea area surrounding Senkaku Islands on 12 April 1978¹⁷. They included armed fishing boats, and Chinese fishing boats encircled the JCG patrol vessels, showed the cabin wall with the chalk description: “Diaoyudao (Senkaku Islands’ Chinese name) is China’s territory, we never permit foreigners’ intrusion (See Photo-1 and Photo-2) .” They pointed the automatic rifles at the JCG patrol vessels. They were well disciplined, and did not fire, though they did not wear military uniforms with the mark of militia. So that the Japanese media could not understand their identity, but their activities were described in the wall newspaper put up in Shanghai City.¹⁸ The CCP members used the wall newspaper to assert their opinion to the people when they cannot accept the party policy in 1960th and 1970th. The militia leader opposed Deng Xiaoping’s fraternal policy to Japan, that is why they gave the maritime demonstration in the Senkaku Islands. The Japanese finally could understand the circumstances by the wall newspaper report.

The U.S. navy ocean surveillance ship USNS *Impeccable* encountered two Chinese fishing trawlers 75 miles south of Hainan Island on 8 March 2009, and they disturbed the surveillance of *Impeccable*¹⁹. Two Chinese trawlers sailed toward *Impeccable*. They quickly targeted the ship’s towed sonar array. One trawler crossed its wake in an attempt to run over the underwater equipment. When this failed, the fishermen tried to use long poles with grappling hooks. Shortly thereafter, the two Chinese fishing trawlers stopped abruptly ahead of *Impeccable* and dropped pieces of wood in the water to block its exit. The crew of these trawlers never wore the military uniforms with the mark of militia. But the American scholars who belong to the U.S. Naval War College and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), drew increasing attention towards Chinese Maritime Militias.



Photo-1: Chinese Armed Fishing Boat
(Photo: Courtesy of JCG)



Photo-2: Chinese Maritime Militias
(Photo: Courtesy of JCG)

Compared to the scholars in the United States, the Japanese scholars had little attention to Chinese maritime militias, though the Chinese Navy’s provocation to the Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force continued²⁰. A Fujian fishing trawler *Mǐn jìn yú*

5179 (around 166 gross tons and 32.99 meters length : Photo-3) intruded into Japanese territorial water surrounding Kubajima Island of the Senkaku Islands on 7 September 2010²¹. *Min jin yu 5179* collided into two JCG patrol vessels; *Yonakuni* and *Mizuki* (Photo-4) . The JCG crew members captured *Min jin yu 5179*, and arrested Zhān Qí Xióng, the Captain of *Min jin yu 5179*²².



Photo-3: Mǐn jīn yú 5179
(Photo: Courtesy of JCG)



Photo-4: Mǐn jīn yú 5179 collided into JCG Patrol Vessel (Photo: Courtesy of JCG)

Japan-China relations deteriorated, and the Chinese Government arrested four Japanese construction company Fujita employees in retaliation²³. Zhan Qi Xiong was said to be a maritime militia, though it was not sure. Anyway, it was the major incident which eliminated the expectations for the restoration of Japan-China cordial relationship²⁴. The Chinese maritime law-enforcement agencies vessels began to intrude into the Japanese territorial waters of the Senkaku Islands in October 2010.

The then President Hu Jintao said, “We should enhance our capacity for exploiting marine resources, develop the marine economy, protect the marine ecological environment, resolutely safeguard China's maritime rights and interests, and build China into a *maritime power*,” at 18th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on 8 November 2012²⁵. The paragraph which included the word “*maritime power*” in the Party Congress’s report in the People’s Daily was just 26 words, and it shows that moderate President Hu Jintao’s passive attitude towards the aggressive maritime policy which will cause the territorial disputes with neighboring countries in the East and Southeast Asia.

3. Xi Jinping’s “Maritime Power” Policy and Maritime Militias

President Hu Jintao stepped down from his post, and Xi Jinping became President of CCP on 14 March 2013. He willingly promoted the *maritime power* policy. He established the State Maritime Committee on 11 March 2013, and integrated four Maritime law enforcement agencies such like China Marine Surveillance (中国海監 : CMS), Fishery Law Enforcement Command (漁政 : FLEC), China Coast Guard of Border Control Department under the Ministry of Public Security (边防海警 : CCG), and

Customs (海關) into China Coast Guard (CCG) under the State Oceanic Administration (SOA).²⁶ This new organization included not only the CCG vessels of Ministry of Public Security, but also other law enforcement agencies' vessels excluding Maritime safety administration (海巡 : MSA).

The SOA and CCG have begun to administrate the ocean development plan, maritime law enforcement, maritime domain control, maritime environment protection. This is the integration of four maritime law enforcement agencies into the CCG, and Xi Jinping has a strong interest in the maritime militias, too.

President Xi Jinping visited Hainan Island from 8 April to 10 April in 2013, and he advised the maritime militias in Tanmen Town of Qióngǎi City that they shall lead not only the fishery activities but also collection of maritime information and support of the construction of maritime features²⁷. This advice became a motivating factor for all coastal cities in China to organize the maritime militia troops, and to support the fishermen's training and construction of the new fishing boats.

As mentioned above, President Xi Jinping began to integrate four maritime law enforcement agencies into CCG and to strengthen the maritime militias. Some may find this odd that the navy was not mentioned. Strengthening of PLA Navy is also important, though Xi Jinping didn't really have control over the Navy, because Xi and Hu lacked specialized knowledge of naval affairs. That is why the CCP Central Military Committee left the PLA Navy under Admiral Wu Shengli for long (See Table 1). It seemed that the CCP Central Military Committee began to intervene in personnel matters of PLA Navy after Admiral Wu's retirement, and the PLA Navy Commanders retired earlier than the commanders in the past (See Table 1).

Table-1 : Personnel Record of the PLA Navy Commander and China Coast Guard Director

【PLA Navy Commander】		【China Coast Guard Director】	
Name	Tenure	Name	Tenure
Liú Huáqīng	1982.8~1988.1	Mèng Hóngwēi	2013.3~2017.12
Zhāng Liánzhōng	1988.1~1996.11	Wáng Zhòngcái	2018.1~2022.6
Shí Yúnsheng	1996.11~2003.6	Yù Zhōng	2022.12~2026.1
Zhāng Dìngfā	2003.6~2006.8	Zhāng Jiànmín	2026.1~
Wú Shēnglì	2006.8~2017.1		
Shěn Jīnlóng	2017.1~2021.8		
Dǒng Jūn	2021.8~2023.12		
Hú Zhōngmíng	2023.12~2025.10		
Zhāng Zhēng	2025.12~		

Source : People's Daily Online, Baike Baidu.com

Remarks : Those who had committed corruption and being purged are shown in red.

The Chinese Government promoted the maritime activities in the South China Sea in 2014, and they dispatched the Oil Rig: Hai Yang Shi You 981 to the sea area off the Paracel Islands on 2 May 2014. The Paracel Islands were also claimed by Vietnam. The Hai Yang Shi You 981 started the oil and gas exploration, escorted by the CCG patrol vessels, cargo ships, fishing boats, and a small number of PLA Navy gunboats because they had to prepare for Vietnam's resistance .

Vietnam dispatched the vessels of Marine Police, Fisheries Resources Surveillance, and fishing boats to cope with Chinese exploration, and their conflict continued to 15 July 2014. It was said that there was the U.S. intervention for Sino-Vietnamese settlement . The experience taught Xi a lesson. The Chinese fishermen hired by the Chinese Government for the escort activities complained that their daily allowance ranging from 500 to 800 Yuan. It was too cheap: . The Chinese government understood that they had to develop more professional and well-integrated maritime militias. This led to strengthening the militia organizations such like Tanmen Town Militia of Qiong Hai City in Hainan Province, and Quanzhou Ocean Institute of Quanzhou City in Fujian Province . Quanzhou Ocean Institute has militia training course, and it has trained 3,000 maritime militias by 2024 . The maritime militia organization exists in almost every Province, so the number of training institutes might increase, too.

Vietnam dispatched the vessels of Marine Police, Fisheries Resources Surveillance, and fishing boats to cope with Chinese exploration, and their conflict continued to 15 July 2014. It was said that there was the U.S. intervention for Sino-Vietnamese settlement²⁸. The experience taught Xi a lesson. The Chinese fishermen hired by the Chinese Government for the escort activities complained that their daily allowance ranging from 500 to 800 Yuan. It was too cheap:²⁹. The Chinese government understood that they had to develop more professional and well-integrated maritime militias. This led to strengthening the militia organizations such like Tanmen Town Militia of Qiong Hai City in Hainan Province, and Quanzhou Ocean Institute of Quanzhou City in Fujian Province³⁰. Quanzhou Ocean Institute has militia training course, and it has trained 3,000 maritime militias by 2024³¹. The maritime militia organization exists in almost every Province, so the number of training institutes might increase, too.

On July 12, 2016, the arbitral tribunal adjudicating the Philippines' case against China in the South China Sea ruled overwhelmingly in favor of the Philippines, determining that major elements of China's claim—including its nine-dash line, recent land reclamation activities, and other activities in Philippine waters—were unlawful, and the Japanese government fully supported this award³². The Chinese Government dispatched 6 CCG vessels and 230 fishing boats to the sea areas of the Senkaku Islands (Photo-5)³³.

A Japanese newspaper reported that more than 100 maritime militias on board, though no crew wore military uniform³⁴. The present writer asked the Chinese scholar if it was true or not. He said, “They were mobilized to oppress Japan to stop the intervention towards the South China Sea issue. They were fishermen being trained and instructed by the Chinese local government. Yes, you can call them militias in a broad sense, though they were not instructed by the PLA Navy.³⁵” The maritime militias’ definition is becoming loose, and expanded, though the photos of the homepage of Quanzhou Ocean Institute showed all the militias in training wore militia’s uniform³⁶.

A new form of harassment in the sea was laser irradiation. The Chinese fishing boats, PLA Navy gunboats, and CCG vessels began to conduct the laser irradiation at the Western navy helicopters, patrol planes, and vessels in the South China Sea in 2019³⁷. A Chinese small boat conducted the laser irradiation at the Canadian Navy’s frigate in the East China Sea on 5 September 2023³⁸. It's unclear whether the boat is a militia vessel.



Photo-5: CCG patrol vessels and Chinese fishing boats in the sea area of the Senkaku Islands in August 2016 (Photo: Courtesy of JCG)

Mr. Conor Kennedy of U.S. Naval-War College reported that the PLA Navy mobilized merchant Roll on-Roll off (RO-RO) ships for the landing exercises in amphibious training areas off the coast of Guangdong Province in 2020³⁹. The PLA Navy may use these merchant RO-RO ships to cover the shortage of amphibious assault ships for landing operation in case of PLA’s Taiwan invasion. Taiwan National Security Bureau also stated on 15 January 2025 that China-linked cargo vessel, the Shunxing-39 damaged an undersea data cable to the north of the island on 3 January 2025⁴⁰. Marine Data Tracking Services showed that the vessel made multiple “figure eights” in the water, which could be an indication that it was dragging its anchor across the seabed to cut the cable. Mobilizing RO-RO ships for amphibious assault operation, and cargo vessels for cable cutting may be new patterns of Chinese maritime militias tactics.

Further, a Chinese man tried to illegally enter northern Taiwan on 14 September 2024 on an inflatable rubber boat (3.6mL) that went undetected by radar systems,

raising alarm bells about gaps in the island's coastal defense capabilities amid heightened cross-strait tensions⁴¹. While the man was spotted by anglers in Tām-tsuí river mouth, he claimed that he had fled China to seek a new life. It was not sure whether he was a militia or not, but the Taiwanese analysts were not ruling out the possibility that the incident could be a part of Beijing's grey-zone tactics against the island. Five other similar incidents occurred in 2025⁴².

Conclusion

As discussed so far, the Chinese Government utilizes maritime militias to oppress Japan, the U.S.A, the Philippines, and Vietnam. But they never actually attacked the JCG crew and the Japanese fishermen. One thing is for sure, the number of Chinese militia fishing boats in December 2025 is about ten times that of the Chinese fishing boats which appeared the East China Sea in 2016. Xi Jinping utilizes the fishing boats to pose a major obstacle to Japan and the United States in the East China Sea. Two thousand fishing boats' row in the East China Sea can be a major barrier to the maritime security cooperation of the Japan-US alliance. No matter what, Xi Jinping wants to stop the US and Japan from getting involved in the Taiwan issue. This is Xi Jinping's "People's War at Sea." But what are they trying to do in the East China Sea? The Chinese maritime militias have quite unsettling aura, which could not be figured out. Careful assessment of their aims and accordingly devising appropriate measures against illegal activities is necessary. Here are the following four points that come to mind.

First, Chinese maritime militia vessels may navigate in a group, or they may tie together with a rope to secure them together in a row, and they navigate together to demonstrate the Chinese presence. This tactic was used by the illegal Chinese fishing boats' crew in the Yellow Sea from 2009 to 2010⁴³. They were not the militia, but the group of illegal Chinese fishermen, and used this tactic to prevent the capture by the South Korean Marine Police. The Chinese maritime militia used this tactic in the sea areas of Whitsun Reef of the Spratly Islands in March 2021⁴⁴. They moored the combined fishing boats in the reef, and they began to demonstrate the Chinese presence to other claimants such like the Philippines, though the Chinese militias in the East China Sea may not use this tactic in case of stormy weather⁴⁵.

Second, Chinese militia vessels may utilize drift nets and fixed nets to disturb navigation of foreign ships. They may disturb not only surface ships but also the submarines' navigation. There was a tragic incident in Indian Ocean in 2012. A local fisherman set the fixed net in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and an Italian cargo ship approached⁴⁶. The Indian fisherman tried to protect his fishing net, and he fired a gun for warning. An Italian soldier who was on board to escort the cargo ship misunderstood the fisherman as a pirate, and shot him dead. The Chinese maritime militias might do the same. They might disguise themselves as fishermen and using

fishing nets to disturb the ships navigation. The South Korean navy once captured the North Korean Yugo class submarine (90 tons and 25 meters length) in July 1998, because the submarine's propeller got tangled in the fishing net⁴⁷. The fishing net can be an obstacle to ship navigation.

Third, Chinese militia vessels may carry and use explosives and weapons. The blast fishing is notorious in the South China Sea, and the Filipino fishermen denounced some Chinese utilized dynamite and cyanide⁴⁸. The Chinese fishermen escalated the environmental degradation of coral reefs in the South China Sea, though some Chinese media made rebuttal⁴⁹. Further, the Chinese maritime militias may use weapons. If so, what is the possible image for this?

There's a good tip. The Vietnamese Marine Police Delegation visited Japan accompanying the Communist Party General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng from 15 to 18 September 2015. They visited Japan Coast Guard Museum YOKOHAMA on the sidelines of the exchange of maritime cooperation memorandum between Japan and Vietnam⁵⁰. They showed strong interest in the exhibition of North Korean spy ship (Ship Name: Chang Yu 3705, 44 gross tons, 29.68 meters length, 4.66 meters width, speed: 33 knots). The spy ship's appearance was a fishing boat, and it scuttled itself after the shootout with the JCG patrol vessels in the East China Sea on 22 December 2001. It was salvaged in 2002 by the Japanese Government. The spy ship was equipped with a portable surface-to-air missile, a recoilless rifle, rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), automatic rifles, machine guns, hand grenades, and so on (See Appendix: Photo-6~Photo-14)⁵¹. The crew members of the North Korean spy ship attacked the JCG patrol vessels with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades (RPG).

International law includes the principle of the prohibition of the use of force⁵². China cannot use military forces explicitly for the expansion of the Chinese territorial waters in the East and South China Seas, so that they use fishing boats for the maritime conflicts with the neighboring countries. Xi Jinping prefers Chairman Mao Ze Dong's People's War tactics, and the maritime militia is his trump card. It is possible that the Vietnamese Marine Police members considered the North Korean spy ship would be the ultimate model of the militia vessel. This might sound abrupt. But no one knows more about China and North Korea than the Vietnamese. Vietnam has been in constant struggle with China since the Han Dynasty⁵³. Vietnam has always anticipated the worst-case scenario and sought ways to survive. For this reason, North Korea's brinkmanship policy can also serve as their reference. We have much to learn.

In the future, we might see combinations of militia boats and drones in the East China Sea. A Filipino fisherman said that China used the surveillance drones in the South China Sea to monitor the Filipino fishing boats in February 2026⁵⁴. It is not sure if the drone was launched from the Chinese militia fishing boat or not, though the number of CCG patrol vessels was limited, and the Chinese militia boat's size in the

South China Sea was almost equivalent to the navy corvette (550 tons displacement and 50 meters length). It is possible that militia boats launched the surveillance drones⁵⁵. A large Chinese drone (Yi Long: Wing Dragon) first appeared in the East China Sea in September 2013, and the small drones appeared in May 2017⁵⁶. The large drones were probably flying in from China, and the small drones were probably flying from the CCG vessels. The maritime militia may launch a drone from the fishing boats, too.

Four, Chinese militia vessels may commit deceptions. Many Chinese fishing boats appeared in the Senkaku sea areas committed AIS spoofing, and they disguised themselves as South Korean fishing boats⁵⁷. The Chinese militias may float mines and periscope dummies in the East China Sea⁵⁸. If there is something resembling a mine or a periscope in the sea, it will be big disturbance to sea lines of communications. China may use this tactic to disturb the Japan-US alliance's maritime cooperation in the next Taiwan contingency. Minesweeping and submarine detection require enormous amounts of time and money. Further, it is possible that Chinese trawler equips intelligence device: intelligence trawler⁵⁹. The militia may disguise themselves as castaways, too. This is a tactic of Southeast Asian pirates⁶⁰.

As seen so far, maritime militias can cause various problems, and lack of their information is a problem. That's why Japan and like-minded countries need to establish a maritime security cooperation conference and a maritime security information sharing center under the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) framework for the information sharing and maintenance of maritime order in the East and South China Seas including the Taiwan Strait⁶¹. With regard to a maritime security information sharing center, there is a good precedent, Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre: ReCAAP ISC⁶².

The Japanese Government also needs to reconsider its domestic system of maritime defense and security to cope with Xi Jinping's "People's War at Sea." We need to increase the number of coast guard officers and patrol vessels. The JCG patrol vessels must cope with the combined fishing boats, and illegal fishing nets being stretched by the maritime militias. The South Korean Navy deployed navy corvettes to Yellow Sea to cope with the North Korean attack and the Chinese fishing boats in June 2009⁶³. If Chinese fishing boats disturb the foreign ships' navigation, or they carry explosives and weapons, JCG crew members must enter the fishing boats for inspections, and the JCG crew members must seize the fishing boats.

If JCG cannot control the Chinese militia boats, Japan must dispatch Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF)'s small gunboats and missile boats. Japan must construct many missile corvettes to cope with armed militia boats such like the North Korean spy ship. The Chinese maritime militias may carry out an amphibious assault on the Japanese remote islands: Nansei Islands including the Senkaku Islands. If so, ship inspections

will be required not only in the territorial waters but also in the contiguous zone. Japan needs to reconsider the laws and roles of Japan Coast Guard and Maritime Self-Defense Force to cope with maritime militias⁶⁴.

Appendix



Photo-6: North Korean Spy Ship
(Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-7: Portable Surface-to-Air Missile and
Recoilless Rifle (Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-8: Automatic Rifles
(Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-9: Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPG)
(Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-10: 14.5mm Machin Gun
(Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-11: Hand Grenade
(Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-12: Underwater Scooter
(Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-13: Onboard Boat
(Photo by Koichi Sato)



Photo-14: Stern Double Doors
(Photo by Koichi Sato)

¹ The description of this report is based on the author's book: "Maritime Power" China, and Japan, the U.S.A, and ASEAN (『「海洋強国」中国と日・米・ASEAN』), Keiso Shobo Publisher (勁草書房), 2023.

² Thousands of Chinese Fishing Boats Quietly Form Vast Sea barriers, *The New York Times*, 16 January 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/16/world/asia/china-ships-fishing-militia-blockade.html>.

³ 上田篤盛「民兵」茅原郁生編『中国軍事用語事典』蒼々社、2006年、406 - 408頁。

⁴ 房功利他『中国人民解放軍 海軍 60年 (1949-2009)』青島出版社、青島、2009年、115頁、平松茂雄『甦る中国海軍』勁草書房、1991年、56-65頁。

⁵ 山本勝也「防衛駐在官の見た中国 (その13) =海上民兵と中国の漁民=」
<https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/navcol/index.html?c=columns&id=056>, accessed 24 February 2026.

⁶ Megha Rajagopalan, "China trains 'fishing militia' to sail into disputed waters," Reuters, 1 May 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/china-trains-fishing-militia-to-sail-into-disputed-waters-idUSKCN0XS0ZI/>, accessed 23 February 2026, 上田篤盛、前掲、アンドリュー・S・エリクソン他編『中国の海洋強国戦略』原書房、2020年、184 - 199頁。

⁷ 「中華人民共和国兵役法」、

<https://www.gjxfj.gov.cn/gjxfj/xxgk/fgwj/ffg/webinfo/2016/03/1460585589889665.htm>, accessed 23 February 2026.

⁸ Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, “China’s Maritime Militia,” 2016, p. 2, https://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Maritime-Militia_Chinas_Erickson-Kennedy_CNA_20160307.pdf, accessed 23 February 2026, 『新時代における中国の国防』 国务院新聞弁公室、外聞出版社、2019年、23頁。

⁹ Author’s interview with a member of Chinese military science academy.

¹⁰ 「全30万人、東シナ海も武装化」『産経新聞』2016年8月17日、James Kraska, “China’s Maritime Militia Vessels May Be Military Objectives During Armed Conflict,” The Diplomat, July 7, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/chinas-maritime-militia-vessels-may-be-military-objectives-during-armed-conflict/>, accessed 23 February 2026.

¹¹ The author’s interview with the Japanese government officer on 23 March 2022, PH Navy expands monitoring as Chinese ships transit nearby, By: [Gabryelle Dumalag](#) - @inquirerdotnet, INQUIRER.net / 03:42 PM December 09, 2025, <https://www.inquirer.net/462651/ph-navy-expands-monitoring-as-chinese-ships-transit-nearby/> , accessed 10 December 2025.

¹² The author’s Interview with the JCG crew on 6 December 2021, 24 March 2023, 7 August 2023, 11 October 2023, and, Gregory B. Poling, Pulling Back the Curtain on China’s Maritime Militia, CSIS, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/211118_Poling_Maritime_Militia.pdf?Y5iaJ4NT8eITSLAKTr.TWxtDHuLlq7wR, accessed 31 December 2023.

¹³ Hongzhou Zhang and Sam Bateman, “Fishing Militia, the Securitization of Fishery and the South China Sea Dispute,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (August 2017), pp. 288-314.

¹⁴ The author’s interview with a Chinese scholar on 23 February 2019.

¹⁵ Hongzhou Zhang and Sam Bateman, op. cit., pp.291-292.

¹⁶ The present writer disagrees with this opinion.

¹⁷ 「尖閣列島に中国漁船群」『朝日新聞』1978年4月13日、1頁、「中国全漁船、領海去る 尖閣周辺」『朝日新聞』1978年4月17日、1頁。

¹⁸ It was published in Hong Kong Newspaper “Ming Pao,” and it was translated in Japanese Newspaper, Asahi Shinbun. 「尖閣事件 裏に首謀者」『朝日新聞』1978年6月23日、7頁。

¹⁹ “Counter-Coercion Series: Harassment of the USNS Impeccable,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, CSIS, <https://amti.csis.org/counter-co-harassment-usns-impeccable/>, accessed 23 February 2026.

²⁰ 『中国安全保障レポート 2011』防衛研究所、2012年、37頁、http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/publication/chinareport/pdf/china_report_JP_web_2011_A01.pdf, accessed 30 January 2018.

²¹ 『海上保安レポート 2011』海上保安庁、2011年、21頁、「最近の日中関係（尖閣諸島

をめぐる基本情報及び最近の中国漁船衝突事件)』『外務省』、平成 22 年 10 月、
https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/pdfs/senaku-gyosen_1010.pdf, accessed 9 March 2026,

²² 「中国人乗組員 聴取」『朝日新聞』2010 年 9 月 9 日、26 頁。

²³ 「中国拘束の日本人 4 人はフジタ社員、20 日から取り調べ」『朝日新聞』電子版 2010.9.24、<http://www.asahi.com/special/senkaku/TKY201009240176.html>, accessed 22 December 2012.

²⁴ There was a maritime joint development plan including the sea area of the median line between Japan and China in 2008. The incident of *Mǐn jìn yú 5179* eliminated the chance for Japan-China rapprochement. 藪中三十二『世界に負けない日本』PHP 新書、2016 年、137 - 143 頁。

²⁵ Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress, 2012-11-27 00:27,
https://iq.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zt/zfgcdsbd/201211/t20121127_2517623.htm, accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁶ 「国務院擬重新組建国家海洋局」『国家海洋局』2013.3.11 (機構改革により閉鎖)、「中国の特色ある海上法執行機関が整備」『中国網 日本語版』、
http://japanese.china.org.cn/politics/txt/2013-03/11/content_28205169.htm, accessed 21 February 2026.

²⁷ 「習近平在海南考察：加快國際旅游島建設 譜寫美麗中國海南篇」『人民網』2013 年 4 月 11 日、<https://cpc.people.com.cn/BIG5/n/2013/0411/c64094-21093668.html>, accessed 21 February 2026.

²⁸ Carl Thayer, “4 Reasons China Removed Oil Rig HYSY-981 Sooner Than Planned,” *The Diplomat*, July 22, 2014, accessed August 13, 2014.

²⁹ Author’s hearing from the Chinese scholar on 3 September 2015.

³⁰ It is said that Tanmen Maritime Militia was established in August 1985, and Quanzhou Ocean Institute was established in 2009. 「海南瓊海潭門鎮海上民兵連副連長王書茂——“繼續守好祖國南大門”」『中国共産党新聞網』2018 年 12 月 26 日、
<http://dangjian.people.com.cn/BIG5/n1/2018/1226/c117092-30488112.html>, accessed 23 February 2026, 「我校国防教育基地正式投入使用」『泉州海洋職業学院』2020 年 6 月 5 日、<https://www.qzoi.edu.cn/info/1331/7311.htm>, accessed 21 February 2026, Behind the Curtain: An Update on Hainan’s Maritime Militia, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 12 December 2024, <https://amti.csis.org/behind-the-curtain-an-update-on-hainans-maritime-militia/>, accessed 12 January 2025, 樊子賢「「国境」に立つ潭門漁民」『アジア太平洋研究科論集』No. 48 (2024.9)、p.32, 『泉州海洋職業学院』
<https://www.gaoxiaojob.com/company/detail/17.html>, accessed 28 February 2026.

³¹ 「媒体聚焦 | 《国防教育》：向海图强勇担当——泉州海洋职业学院大力开展国防教育纪实」『泉州海洋職業学院』2024 年 1 月 9 日、
<https://www.qzoi.edu.cn/info/1331/18751.htm>, accessed 21 February 2026.

³² South China Sea Arbitration Ruling: What Happened and What’s Next? *U.S.-China*

Economic and Security Review Commission, 12 July 2016,
<https://www.uscc.gov/research/south-china-sea-arbitration-ruling-what-happened-and-whats-next>, accessed 28 February 2026, 「日・ベトナム首脳会談」『外務省』2016年7月15日、

http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/s_sa/sea1/vn/page4_002180.html, 「ヤサイ・フィリピン外務大臣による安倍総理表敬」『外務省』2016年7月15日、

http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/s_sa/sea2/ph/page4_002178.html, accessed March 29, 2017.

³³ 「尖閣諸島周辺の中国海警船舶等に関する中国側への申し入れ」『外務省』2016年8月6日、http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press4_003572.html, accessed August 6, 2016, and the author's interview with the government official on 13 September, 2016 and on 20 June, 2018.

³⁴ 「尖閣漁船に中国民兵」『産経新聞』2016年8月17日、1頁。

³⁵ Author's interview with the Chinese scholar specialized in military affairs on 25 January 2017.

³⁶ 「学院隆重举行 2018 级新生开学典礼暨军训阅兵仪式」『泉州海洋職業学院』2018年9月14日、<https://www.qzoi.edu.cn/xgb/info/1271/7832.htm>, accessed 21 February 2026.

³⁷ 「豪軍のへりにレーザー照射 南シナ海 中国？漁船」『朝日新聞』2019年5月30日、9頁、「中国艦、豪機のレーザー照射」『読売新聞』2022年2月21日、7頁、Marcos summons Chinese envoy over 'military-grade laser' incident," *Philippine News Agency*, 14 February 2023, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1195226>, accessed 12 March 2026.

³⁸ 「中国軍艦、カナダ艦に接近 東シナ海で日米と演習中」『共同通信』2023年9月8日、<https://news.yahoo.co.jp/articles/e660f2147cda17f54bOb9753e7949c6d7892c5fb> (リンク切れ)。

³⁹ Conor Kennedy, Ramping the Strait: Quick and dirty Solutions to Boost Amphibious Lift, *CHINA BRIEF*, Vol. 21, Issue 14, 16 July 2021, <https://jamestown.org/ramping-the-strait-quick-and-dirty-solutions-to-boost-amphibious-lift/>, accessed 9 March 2026.

⁴⁰ Taiwan to scrutinise ships with 'flags of convenience,' *Straits Times*, 16 January 2025, p. A6.

⁴¹ Chinese man enters Taiwan on boat, raising alarm about island's defence, *Straits Times*, 17 September 2024, p. A7.

⁴² 「有關「北部分署偵辦 2 名中國籍人士搭乘橡皮艇從觀音海水浴場左側沙灘上岸」一案, 北部分署說明如下:」『海洋委員會海巡署金馬澎分署』2025.5.16、

<https://www.cga.gov.tw/GipOpen/wSite/ct?xItem=165046&ctNode=8195&mp=9996>, accessed 17 May 2025.

⁴³ 「違法操業の中国漁船団、合体して取り締まりに対抗」『AFP』2010年12月23日、<https://www.afpbb.com/articles/-/2780566>, accessed 2 March 2026, *Straits Times*, 24 December 2010.

⁴⁴ "Over 200 Chinese vessels moored at West Philippine Sea reef," *Philippine Daily*

Inquirer, 21 March 2021, <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/194406/over-200-chinese-vessels-moored-at-west-philippine-sea-reef>), accessed 21 March 2021.

⁴⁵ A Japanese scholar pointed out, “In some case, the distance between the two Chinese fishing boats was less than 500m, and it seemed to be dangerous.” 「中国漁船 2000 隻が東シナ海で「異常な隊列」 2025 年末、26 年 1 月にも」『日本経済新聞』2026.2.17, <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOCA091L30Z00C26A2000000/>, accessed 8 March 2026.

⁴⁶ The author’s interview with the director of International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy Reporting Centre in Kuala Lumpur on 19 March 2012.

⁴⁷ 「漁網にかかり捕獲 北朝鮮潜水艇で九人自決 韓国東岸」『AERA』1998 年 7 月 6 日、61 頁。

⁴⁸ In isolated South China Sea territory, Filipino fisherman see ‘dwindling catch,’ *Benar News*, 28 March 2024, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/southchinasea/coral-reefs-dynamite-fishing-west-philippine-sea-03282024154836.html>, accessed 4 March 2026.

⁴⁹ “How the Philippines is destroying South China Sea’s ecological environment,” *People’s Daily Online*, 17 July 2024, <https://en.people.cn/n3/2024/0717/c90000-20194474.html>, accessed 4 March 2026.

⁵⁰ The author’s interview with a Vietnamese diplomat on 15 December 2015.

⁵¹ Leaflet of Japan Coast Guard Museum YOKOHAMA, https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/03kanku/kouhou/jcgm_yokohama/PDF/20230112var.leaflet.pdf, accessed 4 March 2026.

⁵² *The Charter of the United Nations*, article 2(4), https://legal.un.org/repertory/art2/english/rep_supp7_vol1_art2_4.pdf, accessed 23 March 2026.

⁵³ The history of Vietnam is characterized by subjugation to and rebellion against China. Motoo Furuta, *Vietnam in the Context of World History: From Chinese World Order to Joining Southeast Asia*, University of Tokyo Press, 1995.

⁵⁴ Philippine officials visit S. China Sea amid Chinese pressure, *Straits Times*, 24 February 2026, A8.

⁵⁵ A former JMSDF officer told the present writer on 18 March 2026, “We shall understand that Chinese fishing boats have already become the mother ship of the drones.”

⁵⁶ 「領空侵犯の無人機、撃墜も政府が検討 中国は反発」『ハフポスト』2019 年 9 月 18 日、https://www.huffingtonpost.jp/2013/09/18/mujinki-china_n_3946036.html, accessed 24 March 2026, 「中国の無人機運用急増」『読売新聞』、2023 年 2 月 27 日、1 頁。

⁵⁷ Author’s interview with a former JCG member on 19 January 2024.

⁵⁸ Lyle Goldstein and William Murray, Undersea Dragons, *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Spring 2004), pp.161-196.

⁵⁹ Norman Polmar, U.S. Navy: American Spy Ships, *U.S. Naval Institute*, October 2003 Vol. 129/10/1,208, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2003/october/us-navy->

[american-spy-ships](#), accessed 15 March 2026.

⁶⁰ 読売新聞社会部『マラッカ海賊海峡』WAC、2000年、205頁。

⁶¹ The author several times suggested the South China Sea Maritime Security Information Sharing Center (MSISC), but this idea shall be expanded to the East China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. 「インドネシアでの国際会議『東アジアの海洋安全保障——地域的、実務的協力』(世界平和研究所・インドネシア CSIS 共催)」、2017/03/23、

<https://npi.or.jp/research/2017/03/23125618.html>, accessed 12 March 2026, Koichi

SATO, The battle of the Philippines and Japanese Support in the South China Sea, *RIPS Newsletter*, “*East Asian Maritime Security*, Vol.5,”

<https://www.rips.or.jp/en/newsletter/vol-5-september-5-2024/>, accessed 8 March 2026.

⁶² ReCAAP ISC, <https://www.recaap.org/>, accessed 6 March 2026.

⁶³ 「黄海の中国漁船、大半撤収」『時事通信』2009年6月16日、

https://www.jiji.com/jc/v2?id=20090616north_korea_vol2_32, accessed 5 March 2026.

⁶⁴ A new bill for maritime security is needed. The key is Basic Act on Ocean Policy, especially Article 21 and Article 26. It was suggested by Late Professor Soji Yamamoto at the Meeting of JCG Policy Advisers nearly twenty years ago, though it has not been legislated due to the negligence of later generations.

Acknowledgement:

Author sincerely thanks the Japan Coast Guard for providing the materials.