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## **DUTERTE CALLS CHINA A FRIEND AMID SOUTH CHINA SEA TENSIONS**

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Bloomberg (3 April 2019)

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is maintaining a friendly tone toward China, even after defense officials raised concerns over an increased Chinese presence around a disputed island in the South China Sea.

China isnt after Philippine territory and hasnt asked for anything in exchange for the weapons and aid its given the Philippines, Duterte said in a campaign speech in Manila late Tuesday.

You know, Red China or Communist China just wants to be friends with us, Duterte said. He added that he wouldnt confront China over the two countries competing territorial claims in the South China Sea because it would result in war.

More than 200 Chinese ships have been spotted near the Philippine-occupied Thitu Island in the South China Sea since the start of the year, triggering a diplomatic protest from the Philippines.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana earlier this week voiced alarm over Chinas actions in the sea, describing Beijings island-building activity in waters claimed by Manila as very concerning after meeting with acting U.S. counterpart Patrick Shanahan at the Pentagon, the Philippine Daily Inquirer [reported](#).

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-04-03/duterte-calls-china-a-friend-amid-south-china-sea-tensions>

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