
DFA TO WAIT FOR MILITARY REPORT ON CHINA'S MISSILE LAUNCH

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The Department of Foreign Affairs will rely on the military's findings before making a move on Beijing's reported missile launch in the South China Sea.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the department has yet to conduct its own inquiry into the reports as they do not have first-hand knowledge on the incident.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., meanwhile, said they "despise" civilian sources.

"(W)e work hand in glove with the armed forces because war is conduct of diplomacy by other means as diplomacy can be the conduct of war with a measure of finesse," Locsin said on Twitter.

This statement from Locsin echoes the remarks of presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo that the government "will not rely on the say-so of whatever source."

Panelo said the Philippine government will make its official stand on the issue once the investigation is complete.

The US Department of Defense, also called the Pentagon, already confirmed China's missile test from its military outposts in the Spratly Islands, according to a report from Reuters.

The Pentagon said Beijing's recent missile launch was "disturbing" as it also contradicts its promise not to militarize the South China Sea.

"Im not going to speak on behalf of all the sovereign nations in the region, but Im sure they agree that (China's) behavior is contrary to its claim to want to bring peace to the region and obviously actions like this are coercive acts meant to intimidate other (South China Sea) claimants," Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Dave Eastburn said.

First-party verification needed

The Philippines has in the past refused to react to reports of Chinese activity in the South China Sea even when the reports themselves came from China.

In November, the Palace declined to comment on an announcement by the Chinese foreign ministry that China had put up a maritime observation center, a meteorological observatory and a national environmental and air quality monitoring station on its artificial islands in the South China Sea, part of which is the West Philippine Sea.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said at the time that the government will need to "look whether it's true or not."

Asked about the supposed weather stations, Locsin chided media: "I believe you should first verify it yourselves. If you heard that, it's very easy to just fly over it. I mean, don't you have that capability?"

Lorenzana said about a month later that the government could not verify the claims independently. "We cannot go there and inspect them physically," he said.

In May 2018, Harry Roque, the Palace spokesperson at the time, said the government cannot verify reports of missiles being deployed on China's artificial islands in the South China Sea

"[T]heres a technology that we need that we still dont have to be able to verify it for ourselves. Now, I understand that we could get information from third-party resources but that would not be first-party verification," Roque said then.

China's foreign ministry said of the missiles that: "The relevant deployment targets no one. Anyone with no invasive intention will find no reason to worry about this."

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