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## G-7 has its own designs on South China Sea

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The G-7 leaders issued a communique at the close of their summit at Adolf Hitler's favorite Bavarian retreat of Garmisch-Partenkirchen that vilified China for its claims to islands in the energy-rich South China Sea. The G-7 leaders stated, «We strongly oppose the use of intimidation, coercion or force, as well as any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo, such as large-scale land reclamation.» What the G-7 leaders failed to mention is that four members of the elite group, the United States, Britain, France, and Japan, have used proxies like the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Taiwan and the former Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) to fortify island possessions in the South China Sea. The G-7 statement was yet another display of the gross hypocrisy of the group as previously evidenced by their sanctions against Russia, Syria, Iran, and other countries.

In 1973 and 1974, one of the final military efforts of the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese regime in Saigon was to hold a number of the Paracel Islands as a last-ditch effort by the United States

to maintain control over the oil-rich South China Sea and deny the maritime to China. In 1974, China began exploratory drilling in the Paracel Islands and the United States and its South Vietnamese allies attempted to draw «line in the sea» between islands already occupied by China, including Woody Island, and those occupied by South Vietnam.

On January 16, 1974, a South Vietnamese frigate was dispatched to Drummond Island where it encountered two armed Chinese fishing trawlers and a Chinese army detachment occupying the island. Chinese naval vessels were also observed off Duncan Island where they were supporting a small Chinese landing force. The South Vietnamese demanded that China withdraw their forces from the South Vietnamese-claimed islands. The Chinese ordered the South Vietnamese to leave the area. The next day, January 17, thirty South Vietnamese commandos, directed by a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency officer assigned to the U.S. embassy in Saigon, landed on Robert Island and removed a Chinese flag. On January 19, South Vietnamese troops landed on Duncan Island and a firefight broke out with Chinese troops. Outnumbered by the Chinese People's Liberation Army, the South Vietnamese withdrew. After a short air and naval battle, the South Vietnamese Marine garrison on Drummond, Duncan, and Robert islands surrendered to the Chinese. A total of four South Vietnamese frigates were damaged and one was sunk by the Chinese.

The Battle of the Paracels cemented Chinese control of the three surrendered islands, as well as Triton Island, which was also claimed by South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese government protested the action to the United Nations and the North Vietnamese and Vietcong governments remained stonily silent over the Chinese victory. The South Vietnamese lost 53 military personnel and, in addition, the Chinese took 48 prisoners, including a former U.S. Army Green Beret captain, Gerald Kosh, reported to be a «regional security advisor» at the U.S. embassy in Saigon but who was believed to be a CIA agent. In addition to Kosh, there were reports that U.S. Navy SEALs were also on the islands to help the South Vietnamese confront the Chinese.



The South Vietnamese / CIA foray into the Paracels in 1974 was no different than the naval and air brinkmanship now being displayed by U.S. naval and air operations in the South China Sea intended to bring about a confrontation with China. Just as the United States used its South Vietnamese proxy in 1974 to initiate a war with China over the Paracels, today it seeks to accomplish the same using the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Even though the United States has attempted to stir up anti-Chinese military operations among the claimant

nations to the South China Sea islands, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed has stated that China is a threat to no one and that it is the United States that is trying to provoke a military confrontation in the maritime region. Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein has also rejected American bellicosity and said China's naval patrols of the island region are justified. Even Taiwanese media has accused the United States of being behind Vietnamese-Chinese incidents involving ships and oil platforms.

The G-7 leaders conveniently failed to comment on the latent claims of the United Kingdom and France to islands of the South China Sea. Although the two G-7 members have not asserted their claims they have not withdrawn them either. The G-7, displaying its typical hubris, warns China against consolidating its historical claims on the Paracels and Spratlys but fails to admit its own vested interests in the region.

The U.S. and Australian media, particularly media owned by the war-minded neo-conservative Rupert Murdoch, have been full of stories claiming that China is militarizing islands in the Paracels and Spratlys, including alarmist pieces about offensive missiles being deployed to the South China Sea. However, CIA intelligence reports prepared as early as 1974 describe Chinese military installations on the South China Sea islands, so the Western media is reporting «old news» in an attempt to heighten tensions on behalf of the U.S. military-intelligence complex.

Woody Island, also known as Yongxing and located in the Amphitrite group of the Paracels, was the military and civilian headquarters of the Chinese administration of the Paracels in 1974, according to the CIA's own SECRET report titled «East Asian Contested Islands» and dated February 1974. Today it is the home of Sansha City, with a civilian and military population of 600. As far as other islands in the South China Sea, the CIA determined in 1974 that many had Chinese military and naval installations. They included Rocky, connected to Woody by a Chinese-built road; Lincoln; Pattle; Robert; and Duncan. As far as China's presence in the Spratlys on the southern region of the South China Sea, there are military buildings and wharves on South Johnson Reef; a military supply base, gun emplacements, and a radar and radio station on Gavin Reef; a two-story military building and lighthouse on Hughes Reef, and a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Marine Observation Station, airstrip, and radar station on Fiery Cross Reef. None of these installations suggest any offensive Chinese military threat against Australia or the U.S. Seventh Fleet as alleged by the Murdoch media. Nor are the installations a threatening «Great Wall of Sand» as hysterically described by the U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander, Admiral Harry Harris.

President Obama in his military «pivot to Asia» seems to believe that an increased ground, naval, and air presence by the United States in East and Southeast Asia should go unnoticed by regional powers like China. China's modest naval and infrastructure consolidation on the Paracels and Spratlys are a direct response to aggressive American moves in the region, a strategy that began in 1974 with the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese foray into the Paracels. Recently, a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon patrol aircraft flew over Fiery Cross Reef as part of a Pentagon policy of taking «concrete steps» in the region. If the amateur armchair generals and admirals in Washington and Honolulu are fretting over China's increasing profile in the South China Sea, they have only themselves and their «concrete steps» to blame.