

Pivot to Asia, “Underwater Spying”, US Drones Threaten China

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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On December 15, a Chinese warship seized an underwater US drone, patrolling where it doesn't belong in the South China Sea – in Beijing's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Beijing considers foreign vessels, aircraft and other intrusions entering it without permission potential national security threats, especially repeated US provocations.

Thursday's incident occurred about 50 nautical miles northwest of Subic Bay, off the Philippines' west coast. The incident reportedly is the first of its kind, occurring shortly before the US navy ship Bowditch was about to retrieve the submersible.

Pentagon director of press operations Capt. Jeff Davis accused China of seizing US military property, saying “(i)t is ours, and it is clearly marked as ours and we would like it back. And we would like this not to happen again.”

This incident is the latest in a series of provocative US actions, deploying its surface warships, aircraft and now an underwater surveillance drone in Chinese waters or airspace where they don't belong.

Imagine if Beijing did something similar in America's gulf or close to its east or west coasts. US initiated hostilities might follow.

Washington continues testing China's patience provocatively, much like its doing to Russia in the Black Sea and along its borders, increasing its military presence – both nations entitled to respond defensively. Anything less would be irresponsible.

Last April, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, aboard the US carrier Stennis sailing in the South China Sea, said the Pentagon would shortly deploy “new undersea drones in multiple sizes and diverse payloads that can, importantly, operate in shallow water where manned submersibles cannot.”

Clearly, his announcement was aimed at Beijing, these vessels deployed for spying – intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance, also to track area submarines. They're able to launch missiles and UAVs.

They'll be used in waterways worldwide, undetected if things go as planned, clear threats to China, Russia and other targeted nations.

The advent of submersible drones and their use conflicts with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

It defines the rights and responsibilities of nations, using world oceans and seas. Without permission, foreign vessels have no right of so-called "innocent passage" through territorial waters of other nations. Spying and other forms of intelligence gathering are not innocent. It's unlawful intrusion.

US encroachment incidents happen with disturbing regularity. Ones in Chinese waters occur in its 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), Beijing legitimately calling them a national security threat, taking appropriate measures in response.

Washington seeks dominance over areas not its own, risking direct confrontation. Beijing believes US surface, air and underwater spying is preparing the battlefield for future war.

Seizing Washington's underwater drone shows US provocations won't be tolerated. America's rage to dominate assures continued disturbing incidents, risking eventual war.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html>

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com.

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About the author:

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