

# US Warns of South China Sea ‘Provocations’ – But Who Is Provoking Whom?

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*High-ranking US officials claim China’s “[provocations](#)” in the South China Sea are increasing and have warned that it is only a matter of time before such “aggressive and irresponsible behaviour” results in a major incident.*

The frequency and intensity of dangerous incidents between the US and China militaries in the area are indeed increasing. And the possibility of an escalation is certainly higher following the visit to Taiwan by second in line to the US presidency Nancy Pelosi. But the US needs to pause and examine just who is provoking whom.

Jung Pak, of the US State Department’s bureau of East Asia and Pacific affairs said recently there was “a clear and upward trend of PRC provocations against South China Sea claimants and other states lawfully operating in the region”– which means the US and its allies.

Ely Ratner, Assistant Secretary of Defence for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, went further by declaring that “Beijing is systematically testing the limits of our collective resolve”, implying that this has become China’s policy.

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*Featured image: The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson (DDG 114) steams near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. July 14, 2020 © U.S. Navy Photo by Mass*

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