

Spratly Islands

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Spratly Islands Latest News

Vietnam has significantly expanded island-building work in areas it claims in the Spratly Islands chain of the disputed South China Sea and will match and likely surpass the scale of such activity there by China, a U.S. think tank reported recently.

About Spratly Islands

- They are a large group of **reefs, shoals, atolls, and small islets** in the **South China Sea** of the Pacific Ocean.
- They are located **north of insular Malaysia** and are roughly **midway between Vietnam and the Philippines**.
- They are spread out over a vast area of ocean measuring some 158,000 square miles (409,000 square km).
- **Climate: Tropical**
- **A great number of them are submerged.**
- Of the 12 main naturally occurring islets, the **largest** is the 90-acre (36-hectare) **Itu Aba**.

- **Another**, called **Spratly Island or Storm Island**, measures 900 by 1,500 feet (275 by 450 metres).
- **Turtles and seabirds** are the **only wildlife** in these islands. There is **no permanent human habitation**.
- **History:**
 - France held them between 1933 and 1939.
 - **During World War II Japan occupied** the archipelago and developed it as a submarine base.
 - **After the war the Chinese Nationalist government established a garrison on Itu Aba**, which the Nationalists maintained after their exile to Taiwan in 1949.
 - When **Japan renounced its claim to the islands in 1951**, Taiwan, mainland China, and Vietnam all declared themselves the rightful owners, and the Philippines added a claim based on proximity in 1955.
- **Claims:**
 - They are **claimed in their entirety by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, while portions are claimed by Malaysia and the Philippines**.
 - Although Brunei did not claim any territory in the Spratlys, it claims an exclusive economic zone over this area that contained a Spratly reef.

Source: REUT

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