

# ASEAN Gives China Pass on Territorial Dispute

# Trump Threatens Use of Force Against N Korea



Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders link arms during the opening ceremony of the 30th ASEAN Summit in Manila, Philippines on April 29, 2017.

U.S. sailors conduct flight operations on the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson.

MANILA (Reuters) -- Southeast Asian countries took a softer stance on South China Sea disputes during a weekend summit, according to a statement issued on Sunday, which went easy on China by referencing tacit references to its building and arming of its manmade islands.

about the content of its statements. It has often been accused of trying to influence the drafts to muzzle what it sees as dissent and challenges to its sweeping sovereignty claim.

tion of the atmosphere of the Manila meetings.

A chairman's statement of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was released about 12 hours after the summit ended, and dropped references to "land reclamation and militarization" included in the text issued at last year's meeting, and in an earlier, unpublished version seen by Reuters on Sunday.

The statement also noted "the improving cooperation between ASEAN and China", and did not include references to "tensions" or "escalation of activities" seen in earlier drafts and in last year's text. It noted, without elaborating, some leaders' concerns about "recent developments" in the strategic, resource-rich waterway.

"We respected the Philippines' views and cooperated," the diplomat said. "It clearly reflected how the issue was discussed."

The outcome follows what two ASEAN diplomats on Saturday said were efforts by Chinese foreign ministry and embassy officials to pressure ASEAN chair the Philippines to keep Beijing's contentious activities in the strategic waterway off ASEAN's official agenda.

A Philippine diplomat said it was an open secret that China tries to lean on ASEAN members to protect its interests, but that was not the reason for the unusual delay in issuing the statement.

The softened statement comes as the current ASEAN chairman, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, seeks to bury the hatchet with China after years of wrangling over its maritime assertiveness. After lobbying from Duterte, China agreed to let Filipinos back to the rich fishing ground of the Scarborough Shoal following a four-year blockade.

It also indicates four ASEAN members who the diplomats said had wanted a firmer position had agreed to the statement's more conciliatory tone.

"There are one or two member countries which lobbied for some changes in some text in the statement, but not related to the South China Sea," the source said.

The no-nonsense leader set the tone for the meeting on Thursday when he said it was pointless discussing China's maritime activities, because no one dared to pressure Beijing anyway. As a sign of Duterte's friendship with Beijing, three Chinese navy vessels on Sunday made a rare visit to the Philippines. Duterte will inspect a guided-missile destroyer in his hometown of Davao on Monday.

China is not a member of the 10-member bloc and did not attend the summit but is extremely sensitive

Beijing has reacted angrily to individual members expressing their concern about its rapid reclamation of reefs in the Spratlys and its installation of missile systems on them.

Duterte's foreign policy strategy is a stunning reversal of that of the previous administration, which had close ties with the United States and was seen by China as a nuisance.

Another ASEAN diplomat said the statement was a genuine representa-

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- U.S. President Donald Trump would not rule out the use of military force against North Korea in an interview on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Saturday.

Carl Vinson aircraft carrier group arrived in waters near the Korean peninsula, where it will join the USS Michigan, a guided missile submarine that docked in South Korea on Tuesday.

Trump downplayed the significance of North Korea's "small missile launch" early Saturday, but when asked by host John Dickerson if he would consider military action in response to another nuclear test, he responded, "I don't know. I mean, we'll see."

"The moment the USS Michigan tries to budge even a little, it will be doomed to face the miserable fate of becoming a underwater ghost without being able to come to the surface," the North's Uriminzokkiri website said in a posting.

North Korea test-fired a ballistic missile believed to be a KN-17 on Saturday. Washington claims the missile blew up over land in North Korean territory and the test appeared to have failed.

"The urgent fielding of the nuclear submarine in the waters off the Korean Peninsula, timed to coincide with the deployment of the super aircraft carrier strike group, is intended to further intensify military threats toward our republic," it added.

Washington has a habit of pressuring the UN into imposing sanctions on North Korea, which has led to a humanitarian crisis amid a protracted famine in the country.

"Whether it's a nuclear aircraft carrier or a nuclear submarine, they will be turned into a mass of scrap metal in front of our invincible military power centered on the self-defense nuclear deterrence." Trump thinks Chinese President Xi Jinping is "putting pressure" on North Korea, the U.S. president said in an interview to air Sunday.

In response to Trump's war of words, North Korea has threatened to destroy an American sub - leaving it an "underwater ghost".

"I would Korea carries out a nuclear test "I north not be happy," Trump said. "And I can tell you also, I don't believe that the president of China, who is a very respected man, will be happy either," he said.

## Philippines Says Trump Called Duterte to Affirm Alliance



Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte gestures while addressing the media following the conclusion of the 30th ASEAN Leaders' Summit in Manila, Philippines. (AP photo)

MANILA (Dispatches) — U.S. President Donald Trump has called Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte and expressed Washington's commitment to their treaty alliance and his interest in developing "a warm, working relationship," a Filipino official said Sunday.

scribed late Saturday's call as "very friendly" and said the U.S.-Philippine alliance "is now heading in a very positive direction."

Presidential spokesman Ernie Abella said Trump mentioned he was looking forward to visiting the Philippines in November to attend an East Asia summit that Duterte will host with several world leaders and that Trump invited Duterte to visit the White House.

Abella's remarks reflect the friendlier attitude Duterte has taken with Trump versus the antagonistic stance he had toward President Barack Obama, who he once asked to "go to hell" for criticizing the Philippine leader's bloody anti-drug crackdown. During Obama's final months in office, the Philippine president moved to build closer economic ties with China and Russia while repeatedly threatening to end his nation's longstanding military alliance with the U.S.

"The discussion that transpired between the presidents was warm, with President Trump expressing his understanding and appreciation of the challenges facing the Philippine president, especially on the matter of dangerous drugs," Abella said in a statement.

"It behooves upon America, who wields the biggest stick, just to really be prudent and patient. We know that we are playing with somebody who relishes letting go of his missiles and everything," Duterte said.

## Italy's Renzi Likely to Win Democratic Party Election



Former Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi is campaigning for leadership of his country's Democratic Party.

ROME (AFP) - Former Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi is Sunday poised to win the leadership of Italy's ruling Democratic Party (PD) in a primary election, propelling him back to the forefront of the national political scene.

platform, the reform had aimed to streamline Italy's parliamentary system.

Renzi, 42, resigned as prime minister in December after Italians overwhelmingly rejected a constitutional referendum.

In the aftermath of the December vote defeat and facing a rebellion from the left wing of his centre-left party, Renzi in February stepped down as party leader with the aim of regaining legitimacy in a future vote.

On Sunday he was up against two candidates considered further

to the left: Justice Minister Andrea Orlando and Michele Emiliano, who heads the southern Puglia region.

An internal vote conducted by the party earlier this month suggested a clear Renzi victory after he scored 66.7 percent, with 25.3 percent for Orlando and eight percent for Emiliano.

When he first took over the leadership in December 2013, Renzi won the backing of close on 68 percent of 2.8 million voters.

Similar figures would underpin the winner's legitimacy --but Emiliano warned the election will be a flop if less people vote this time, while Orlando said that less than two million cast ballots would signal a failure.

Renzi set the bar much lower -- at one million.

Voting booths, mainly stands on the streets, opened at 8:00 am (0600 GMT) and were to close at 8:00 pm (1800 GMT).

The vote was open to all Italians over 16 years old, EU citizens residing in Italy and non-EU foreigners with valid residency permits -- on condition of paying a donation of at least two euros.

SEOUL (Dispatches) — Residents in the South Korean village where a U.S. missile defense system is being installed have scuffled with police.

Residents in the town Seongju were trying to block two U.S. Army oil tank trucks on Sunday from entering site where the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) is being installed.

South Korean media reported there were approximately 300 residents and 800 police. A few residents were injured or fainted from the scuffle and transported to a hospital.

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MINSK (AP) — The wife of a leading opposition figure in Belarus said he has been arrested and jailed on the eve of a planned protest.

Maria Adamovich said Sunday that she was informed by police Saturday that her husband, Nikolai Statkevich, had been jailed for five days. She said that police didn't say why.

Statkevich is one of the most prominent figures in Belarus' beleaguered opposition. Authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, in office since 1994, suppresses opposition and independent news media.

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HAVANA (AFP) - A plane crash in western Cuba on Saturday killed eight military personnel, the ministry in charge of the island's armed forces said.

The Russian-made AN-26 transport aircraft crashed in a mountainous region of western Artemisa province, killing all eight on board including the plane's crew, the Revolutionary Armed Forces ministry said in a statement carried by state media.

The plane, which can carry up to 40 people, had taken off from Playa Baracoa airport just outside the capital Havana. It crashed into a mountain, Loma de la Pimienta, 35 miles (55 kilometers) distant.

The ministry said it was investigating the causes of the accident.

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GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Guatemalan authorities say a 25-year-old U.S. citizen accused of driving into a crowd of protesting students killing one and injuring more than a dozen others is in custody.

The students were protesting a shortage of teachers at their school Wednesday when a car plowed into them and then fled. The damaged car was found later abandoned at a parking lot. Inside investigators found a residential access card in the suspect's name and the car was registered to his father, an evangelical pastor.