This file photo shows ongoing land reclamation by China on Subi Reef (Jhubi Reef) as seen from Thitu Island (Jhongye Island) of the Spratly group of islands (Nansha Islands) in the South China Sea on May 11, 2015.
Photo: Reuters

The Pentagon on Tuesday said that a recent Chinese missile launch in the disputed South China Sea was “disturbing” and contrary to Chinese pledges that it would not militarize the disputed waterway.

The South China Sea is one of a growing number of flashpoints in the US-China relationship, which include a trade dispute, US sanctions and Taiwan.

China and the US have repeatedly traded barbs in the past over what Washington says is Beijing’s militarization of the South China Sea by building military installations on artificial islands and reefs.

A US official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) tested multiple anti-ship ballistic missiles over the weekend.

“Of course the Pentagon was aware of the Chinese missile launch from the man-made structures in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands [Nansha Islands, □□□□],” Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Dave Eastburn said.

“I’m not going to speak on behalf of all the sovereign nations in the region, but I’m sure they

agree that the PRC's behavior is contrary to its claim to want to bring peace to the region and obviously actions like this are coercive acts meant to intimidate other [South China Sea] claimants," Eastburn added.

China has not confirmed the missile tests and on Tuesday the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs declined to comment, referring questions to the Chinese Ministry of National Defense, which did not respond to a request for comment.

The Chinese government has said that the military was carrying out drills between the Spratly and Paracel Islands (Xisha Islands, □□□□) starting last weekend and ending yesterday, warning other shipping not to enter a designated area.

China's claims in the South China Sea, through which about US$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes each year, are contested by Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

News of China's missile test was first reported by NBC News.

Source: Taipei Times - 2019/07/04