



# The Construction of Natuna Military Base in Response to China's Claim

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**Abstract.** The Indonesia-China dispute arose after the People's Republic of China incorporated the Natuna area into its territory and doing reclamation and then expanded small islands such as Mischief Reef and Subi Island as part of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea Jakarta and Beijing have long been at loggerheads in the Natuna region. The construction of an integrated Indonesian military base in Natuna is not only to send a strong message to China, but also part of Indonesia's efforts to emerge as a real maritime player in the Indo-Pacific region. This paper uses a qualitative approach and the theoretical concept used is the Deterrence Effect theory, as well as a concept of Defense and Security. The results of this research indicate that Indonesia responds quickly to all actions taken by China to interfere with Indonesia's sovereignty, one of which is to build an Integrated Military Base in Natuna as a Deterrence Effect against all Chinese claims to Indonesian sovereignty.

**Keywords:** Military Base · Natuna · Indonesia · China · Deterrence Effect

## 1 Introduction

Tensions between Indonesia and China are always about territorial sovereignty, although the issue of Illegal and Economic Workers coloring disharmony between the two countries sometime, it is sovereignty that has always been the root of the problem of tensions between Jakarta and Beijing. China which is superior in all aspects of Indonesia, always inflames the anger of all Indonesian people by provoking claims to the sovereign territory of the nusantara, the Natuna islands located at Riau island province is Indonesia's outer border line and is directly in contact with the South China Sea area which is claimed by China, therefore it is the claims of parts of the Natuna sea area that have always been a source of tension between the two countries.

The attack on Chinese fishing boat escorted by the China Coast Guard in the Natuna Sea has attracted public attention. China is considered to have violated the border of Indonesian sovereignty, on the other hand, China is adamant that it has not violated anything. Nine dash line is China's claim on Natuna. This polemic over Natuna that

makes relations between Indonesia and China a little heated. Indonesia even alerted thousands of Indonesian armies in the Natuna waters. The aim is to take firm action against foreign ships that enter and steal fish in Indonesian waters. Why does China allow its fishermen to fish in Natuna, the Chinese government argues that the Natuna Sea is their territory. According to Geng Shuang, a spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Natuna Sea is a historic fishing region also known as the nine-dash line. Another interesting thing is, until today China has not recognized the name of the Natuna Sea. China is adamant that the area's waters be referred to as the South China Sea. In the meantime, the Indonesian government introduced the South China Sea's name change to North Natuna Sea in 2017. This also improves the map of Indonesia to the most recent edition.

To analyze the research problems, the author use a number of references and previous studies. This research is different from previous research because the object of this research is the construction of an integrated military base in natuna as a response to China's claim. Some of these studies are: Muhammad Ryan [1], Shabrina [2], Haryanto [3], Al-Attar [4]. Most of the research only describe the South China Sea conflict in general, but does not examine Indonesia's response to China for the conflict.

## 2 Literature Review

The ability to protect oneself or to survive in the face of genuine risks (existential threats) can be seen as security. The defense and security approach referred to in this case is the military force approach used to protect state sovereignty, including the maritime territory. The military approach is not the primary strategy in the Natuna block conflict in the South China Sea; rather, it is a preventative measure set up for the required circumstances. Of course the first step taken is to protest and diplomacy.

To analyze the problems in this research, one of the theories in international relations, which is Deterrence Theory, will be used. Based on the development of an increasingly complicated security situation, the theory is also experiencing development so that it is suitable when used to analyze this research problem. Deterrence can be interpreted as state action in achieving national security goals by carrying out defense efforts without carrying out military action or war. This theory is a way that can be taken in a country's efforts to avoid war while at the same time providing a deterrent effect on opposing parties. Translated literally in Indonesian, Deterrence means rejection, deterrence and prevention [5]. As for military studies, Deterrence is often interpreted as a 'deterrence strategy' so that the opposing party feels reluctant and afraid so that they will think long and hard about carrying out attacks on our side [6].

Deterrence Effect, this concept is how to show that Indonesia is ready to face anything if its sovereignty is disturbed, even if there must be an open war. In the context of the Deterrence Effect, what Indonesia must do is show of force, psychologically attacking that Indonesia has the commitment and capability to defend the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. By construction of integrated military base Natuna Island, it will more or less influence China's courage to enter Indonesian territory again.

### 3 Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method. This method is widely used in social and political sciences, such as anthropology, sociology and International Relations [7]. The research was conducted in Indonesia with a focus on the Construction of the Natuna Integrated Military Base as a Response to China's claims. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The characteristics of the informants are considered capable of providing information related to the construction of the Natuna Integrated Military Base. Data was collected through observation techniques, interviews were conducted with key informants. Data processing was carried out through an interactive analytical approach from Miles and Huberman through the stages: data collection, data reduction, data processing and data verification [8]. Primary data is data obtained directly in conducting research through field observation activities, FGD activities and in-depth interviews with research informants. While secondary data is data obtained or related to the Development of the Natuna Integrated Military Base as a Response to China's claims, consisting of; annual reports and research results that have been published in the form of books, scientific journals, articles and those related to research problems as well as all laws and regulations related to research.

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 China's Claim on Natuna

China claims the Natuna Sea area based on historical facts since the Ming Dynasty in 110 BC. In that era, sea expeditions were carried out to the Spratly Islands and Chinese fishermen and traders had worked and settled in the region. China's claim was strengthened by issuing nine dash line maps in 1947 and May 2009. China's historical claim to the EEZ on the reason that Chinese fishermen have long been active in these waters is unilateral, has no legal basis and has never been recognized by UNCLOS 1982. This arguments has been discussed and countered by the 2016 SCS Tribunal Decision. Indonesia also rejects the term "relevant waters" claimed by China because this term is unknown and not in accordance with UNCLOS 1982. Indonesia urges China to explain the legal basis and clear boundaries regarding claims China in the EEZ based on UNCLOS 1982. The South China sea conflict map show in Fig. 1 [9].

The portion of the South China Sea that lies inside Indonesia's EEZ was dubbed the North Natuna Sea in 2017. The South China Sea is no longer considered to be part of Indonesia's territorial seas after the most recent name change. China expressed opposition to such strategy shortly after the name change, claiming it would exacerbate and widen the conflict. It is not in the interests of harmonious relations between Jakarta and Beijing to change the name, which will also affect peace and stability. However, Indonesia argued that the North Natuna Sea was part of its territory and that it had the right to name its own territorial seas). The renaming of the North Natuna Sea is an important decision by the Indonesian government, following a number of similar decisions made by other Southeast Asian countries previously. Indonesia's policy of naming the North Natuna Sea on the new map of the Republic of Indonesia indirectly reflects a low-profile



**Fig. 1.** South China sea conflict map.

form of resistance to Chinese expansion, as well as a resistance to China's Nine Dash Line which often violates neighbours countries economic rights who have EEZ.

Does China's claim to the Natuna region break Indonesian sovereignty? No. This is because the Natuna Sea, which Chinese fishing boat enter, is an EEZ. According to UNCLOS, the EEZ is a sea area as far as 200 miles from the outer islands at low tide. The total area of Indonesia's EEZ is 2,936,345 km<sup>2</sup>. Indonesia has also ratified UNCLOS and has a law number 5 of 1983 concerning EEZ. Indonesia has the following sovereign rights: Exploration, exploitation, management and conservation of natural resources, has the right to research, protect and preserve the sea Permits international shipping through this area and installs various means of sea transportation Furthermore, the keywords that need to be outline to the EEZ is sovereign rights. In the perspective of international law, sovereign rights are different from sovereignty. Simply put, because Indonesia is sovereign as an archipelagic country, the Natuna Sea should be explored by Indonesia. Another nation will undoubtedly have infringed Indonesia's sovereign rights if it explores the Natuna Sea. However, this does not violate Indonesian sovereignty. Indonesia's sovereignty is only truly violated if another country enters Indonesia's territorial waters. Territorial waters are sea boundaries drawn from the outermost islands with a distance of 12 miles to the open sea. Indonesia has a territorial sea of 282,583 km<sup>2</sup>. Does China also have the right to the EEZ in the Natuna Sea, No. The Natuna Sea is Indonesia's EEZ waters which is recognized by the United Nations. Even so, UNCLOS allows other countries to take advantage of the EEZ as stipulated in article 58 (1). It is stated that the country must ask permission from the country entitled to the EEZ area.

#### **4.2 Indonesian Integrated Military Base, Deterrence Effect Against China**

Strengthening defense in Natuna is actually not to fight against China but to express a military position that Indonesia is the legitimate and undeniable owner of the Natuna territory. For this reason, the Indonesian government is very active in supporting the resilience and sovereignty of the territorial boundaries of the Natuna seas, both in terms of the navy, air and ground forces. The Indonesian government does not want Natuna to be annexed by other countries, after conducting Rapid Reaction Strike Force exercises and changing the name of the South China Sea to the North Natuna Sea, recently the

government inaugurated a military base in Natuna in 2018. Indonesian Army Commander Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto accompanied by all chief of Indonesian army staff, General Andika Perkasa, Admiral Siwi Sukma Adji, and Marshal Yuyu Sutisna at that time inaugurated the Natuna Integrated military Unit at the TNI-AL Faslabuh Port, Lampa Strait, Natuna Islands, Riau Islands Province. The inauguration of the Natuna Integrated military unit which is also the Integrated Military Base was published by Hong Kong's largest media, the South China Morning Post entitled: Indonesia opens military base on edge of South China Sea to deter security threats. The Natuna Integrated Military Unit's inauguration, according to the commander of the Indonesian army, was the culmination of one of the medium-term strategic planning programs to strengthen the Indonesian army in order to be able to deter threats, particularly those at the border.

It is intended for this integrated military base to be a part of the already established Joint Regional Defense Command. The Indonesian Land Army's Composite Battalion, which is supported by the Combat Engineering Company, the Air Defense Artillery Missile Battery, and the Field Artillery Battery, make up the Integrated Military Unit, which is still in its embryonic stage. In the meanwhile, in addition to the Indonesia Navy Base, there are port facilities and Marine Composite Companies to support the activities of navy warships operating near Natuna waterways. To support the operations of Indonesian military aircraft, the air force military base is outfitted with a number of facilities, including the Integrative Hangar and the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Squadron. Additionally, it has other features. In addition it is intended for this integrated military base to be a part of the Joint Additionally, it has a mess and an integrative hospital to offer medical care to all Indonesian soldiers stationed in Natuna. The Main Weapon System Tool stationed in Natuna is cannot be underestimated, alerted by three large KRI Bung Tomo frigates class and Diponegoro corvettes class to conduct patrols in the waters of Natuna and the South China Sea. The latest, of course, is the Indonesian navy's Parchim corvette class which unexpectedly turned out to be joining in Natuna. Originally, submarines would also be stationed in Natuna to tackle aspects of underwater warfare. It hasn't finished there, the plan is to deploy a squadron of fighter planes in Natuna to carry out Maritime Strike-capable air patrol operations. Its combat aircraft are also first-class, such as the F-16 C/D Block 52ID and the Indonesian Air Force's Sukhoi Su-27/30. And of course there are the three matra of the Indonesian military elite troops such as the Marines, Paskhas and Kostrad. In Natuna, various tracking radars are also on alert so that they can find out if a foreign element enters Indonesian territory without permission, even a stealth aircraft will be detected if it tries to commit a violation. With the increasing threats, the Natuna Integrated Military Unit will continue to grow. It is conceivable to design for the Integrated Military Unit to become a permanent, integrated organization with a single command and an operational control system built around network-centric fighting capabilities in the future. Strengthening Natuna is intended as an element of the Deterrence Effect theory, which is to make opponents fear before committing violations against Indonesian territory.

Currently, the Natuna waters are being threatened by China's claims. China uses the Nine Dash Line map to claim Natuna as one of its territorial waters. China also stated that the Natuna waters were its traditional fishing territory. The Indonesian government certainly opposes China's statement because it is not in accordance with any international



**Fig. 2.** Indonesian integrated military base.

law. The Indonesian government is making efforts to maintain the security of the Natuna waters, the Indonesian government is making deterrence efforts by threatening China that Indonesia will not hesitate to arrest foreign ships that enter illegally into Natuna waters. The Indonesian integrated military base show in Fig. 2.

## 5 Conclusion

There have long been fears that Indonesia will become involved in a dispute in the South China Sea because of the importance of the waters. The South China Sea is a trade route that delivers international goods and services with a value of \$5 trillion which is five times Indonesia's GDP. With such a large number, China and other countries in the region, as well as the United States, have started to get involved in disputes over territorial control in the region. The Natuna sea's security has been maintained through a number of initiatives made by the Indonesian government. By sending more Indonesian troops to the border area patrols, thereby enhancing the security of the Natuna waters. By constructing an integrated military camp in the Natuna region, the Indonesian government will likewise strengthen its armed forces and ensure that no more Chinese fishing vessels are allowed to enter the waters off Natuna without authorization. The Indonesian government even plans to strengthen its military position in these waters. The Indonesian government is also carrying out a Show of Force effort where Indonesian military troops are ready to show their military strength and emphasize to China that the Indonesian government is serious about maintaining its territorial sovereignty.

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