

South China Sea: Why the Philippines and China are on a collision course

Take a close look at a video of Sunday's "collision" between a Philippine coastguard ship and a Chinese maritime militia vessel in the South China Sea.

As the stern of one bumps the deck of the other, right in the middle of the frame is a Filipino television crew scrambling to get what in the business is called an "action piece to camera".

The confrontation between Manila and Beijing over submerged shoals in the South China Sea has been going on for decades.

But in recent months something has changed. The spats at sea are now unfolding in the full glare of the television media. This is the second time in weeks Philippine journalists have filmed a close encounter near a particularly sensitive reef known variously as Second Thomas Shoal, Ayungin Shoal or Ren Ai Reef.

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