

Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone of
25 February 1992

The Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone of the People's Republic of China, adopted at the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on 25 February 1992.

Article 1

This law is formulated in order to enable the People's Republic of China (PRC) to exercise its sovereignty over its territorial sea and its rights to exercise control over its contiguous zone, and to safeguard State security as well as its maritime rights and interests.

Article 2

The PRC's territorial sea refers to the waters adjacent to its territorial land.

The PRC's territorial land includes the mainland and its offshore islands, Taiwan and the various affiliated islands including Diaoyu Island, Penghu Islands, Dongsha Islands, Xisha Islands, Nansha (Spratly) Islands and other islands that belong to the People's Republic of China.

The PRC's internal waters refer to the waters along the baseline of the territorial sea facing the land.

Article 3

The extent of the PRC's territorial sea measures 12 nautical miles from the baseline of the territorial sea. The PRC's baseline of the territorial sea is designated with the method of straight baselines, formed by joining the various base points with straight lines.

The outer limit of the PRC's territorial sea refers to the line, every point of which is at a distance of 12 nautical miles from the nearest point of the baseline of the territorial sea.

Article 4

The PRC's contiguous zone refers to the waters that are outside of, but adjacent to, its territorial sea. The extent of the contiguous zone has a width of 12 nautical miles.

The outer limit of the PRC's contiguous zone is a line, every point of which has a nearest distance of 24 nautical miles from the baseline from which the territorial sea is measured.

Article 5

The People's Republic of China exercises sovereignty over its territorial sea and the airspace over the territorial sea, as well as its seabed and subsoil.

Article 6

Non-military foreign ships enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China according to law.

To enter the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China, foreign military ships must obtain permission from the Government of the People's Republic of China.

Article 7

While passing through the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China, foreign submarines and other underwater vehicles shall navigate on the surface of the sea and show their flags.

Article 8

While passing through the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China, foreign ships shall abide by the laws and regulations of the People's Republic of China and shall not impair the peace, security and good order of the People's Republic of China.

Foreign nuclear-powered ships and other ships carrying nuclear, toxic or other dangerous substances must carry certain documents and observe special precautionary measures when they pass through the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China.

The Government of the People's Republic of China has the right to adopt all necessary measures to prevent and stop the passage of a ship which is not innocent through its territorial sea.

Foreign ships which violate the laws and regulations of the People's Republic of China shall be dealt with according to law by relevant departments of the People's Republic of China.

Article 9

To ensure the safety of navigation and satisfy other requirements, the Government of the People's Republic of China may require foreign ships passing through its territorial sea to use the designated sea lane or prescribed traffic separation scheme. Concrete methods should be issued by the Government of the People's Republic of China or its relevant responsible departments.

Article 10

The relevant responsible organs of the People's Republic of China shall have the right to order an immediate eviction of foreign military ships or ships owned by foreign Governments and operated for non-commercial purposes that violate the laws or regulations of the People's Republic of China while passing through the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China. Losses or damage caused shall be borne by the nations whose flag is being flown by the ship in question.

Article 11

Any international, foreign organization, or individual who intends to conduct activities connected with scientific research or marine survey shall first seek the consent of the People's Republic of China or its relevant responsible departments and abide by the laws and regulations of the People's Republic of China.

Whoever is found illegally entering the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China to conduct activities connected with scientific research or marine survey in violation of the preceding provisions shall be dealt with by the relevant organs of the People's Republic of China according to law.

Article 12

Foreign aircraft may not enter the air above the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China unless they do so in accordance with agreements or accords which the Governments of their countries have signed with the Government of the People's Republic of China, or they have been approved or accepted by the Government of the People's Republic of China or organs it has authorized.

Article 13

The People's Republic of China has the authority to exercise powers within its contiguous zone for the purpose of preventing or punishing infringement of its security, customs, fiscal sanitary laws and regulations or entry-exit control within its land territories, internal waters or territorial sea.

Article 14

When competent authorities of the People's Republic of China have good reasons to believe that a foreign ship has violated the laws and regulations of the People's Republic of China, they may exercise the right of hot pursuit.

The hot pursuit commences when the foreign ship, or one of its small boats, or other craft working as a team and using the ship pursued as a mother ship is within the limits of the internal waters, territorial sea or contiguous zone of the People's Republic of China.

If the foreign ships are in the contiguous zone of the People's Republic of China, the hot pursuit may proceed only when the rights of the relevant laws and regulations set forth in article 13 above have been violated.

As long as the hot pursuit is not interrupted, it may continue outside the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China or the contiguous zone. The hot pursuit ceases as soon as the ship pursued enters the territorial sea of its own country or of a third country.

The right of hot pursuit in this article is exercised by warships or military aircraft of the People's Republic of China, or by ships or aircraft authorized by the Government of the People's Republic of China to that effect.

Article 15

The baseline of the territorial sea of the People's Republic of China shall be established by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

Article 16

The Government of the People's Republic of China shall draw up relevant regulations in accordance with this law.

Article 17

This law becomes effective upon promulgation.