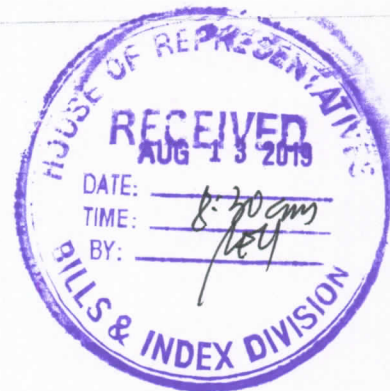


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill No. 3824

Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Spratly Islands are a group of more than 750 reefs, islets, atolls, cays and islands in the South China Sea. The archipelago lies off the coasts of the Philippines and Malaysia (Sabah), about one third of the way from there to southern Vietnam. They comprise less than four square kilometers of land area spread over more than 425,000 square kilometers of sea. The Spratlys are one of three archipelagos of the South China Sea which comprise more than 30,000 islands and reefs and which complicate governance and economics in that region of Southeast Asia. Such small and remote islands have little economic value in themselves, but are important in establishing international boundaries. There are no native islanders but there are rich fishing grounds and initial surveys indicate the islands may contain significant reserves of oil and natural gas.

About 45 islands are occupied by relatively small numbers of military forces from Vietnam, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Malaysia and the Philippines. Brunei has also claimed an EEZ in the southeastern part of the Spratlys encompassing just one area of small islands above mean high water.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said claimant countries – except Taiwan and Brunei – have strengthened fortifications in the islets and shoals in the Spratlys. From one islet it began occupying in 1984, Malaysia now has troops on five islets with one having a 1,200-meter runway, which can reportedly accommodate heavy civilian and military transport planes, as well as a naval station in an island known as Layang-Layang, which had been a dive resort for tourists.

China also was seen to have a steady military buildup in the area despite its being a signatory to the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. Latest surveillance photographs showed different machine gun emplacement as well as additional communications antennae. Naval vessels have also been anchored in Chigua Reef.

Vietnam has also made impressive improvements in their occupied islands, with new communication equipment installed in Sin Cow (Rurok Island). There are also single storey buildings in Allison Reef and in other sites such as Barque Canada Reef, Discovery Great Reef, Petley Reef, Pigeon Reef, and in East Reef.

Aside from these, the AFP has also monitored new intrusions by China at a Philippine-claimed island, where the Chinese put up buoys and posts that were subsequently dismantled by Filipino fishermen. Chinese vessels also reportedly harassed an oil exploration ship of Department of Energy at Reed Bank. The Philippine military also reported sighting two foreign jets flying over the area, which were reportedly Chinese.

In order to protect our sovereignty and strengthen our claim over the Islands, we should intensify our military presence in the area and provide our military with the equipment necessary to defend our territory when the need arises. Further, there is a need for a group exclusively dedicated to ensuring that our claim over the Spratly Islands is protected.

In view of the foregoing, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly requested.


RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
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House Bill No. 3824

AN ACT

CREATING THE SPRATLY ISLAND TASK FORCE UNDER THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES, AND APPROPRIATING THE SUM OF ONE BILLION PESOS (P1,000,000,000) FOR THAT PURPOSE

Be in enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Creation of the Spratly Island Task Force* – There is hereby created a Spratly Island Task Force under the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to exclusively handle the protection and security over the Spratly Islands.

SEC. 2. The Task Force shall be headed by the Chief of Staff of the AFP and shall be composed of members of the AFP which have been trained to handle the security situation in the Spratly Islands.

SEC. 3. The Task force shall be tasked to exclusively secure the Spratly Islands which the Philippines claims ownership and to ensure that no foreign entities invade Philippine territory to the prejudice of the Philippines.

SEC. 4. The amount of One Billion Pesos (P1,000,000,000) is hereby appropriated to fund the creation and the operations and activities of the Task Force.

SEC. 5. It is hereby required that an annual report regarding the use of the funds appropriated by this Act be submitted to both houses of Congress.

SEC. 6. The AFP shall formulate and issue the necessary rules, regulations and guidelines that will govern the powers, jurisdictions, activities and operations of the Task Force.

SEC. 7. *Separability Clause* – If any portion of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other provisions not affected thereby.

SEC. 8. *Repealing Clause* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 9. *Effectivity* – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,