

The World Factbook



East & Southeast Asia :: Spratly Islands

Introduction :: Spratly Islands

Background:

The Spratly Islands consist of more than 100 small islands or reefs. They are surrounded by rich fishing grounds and potentially by gas and oil deposits. They are claimed in their entirety by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, while portions are claimed by Malaysia and the Philippines. About 45 islands are occupied by relatively small numbers of military forces from China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Since 1985 Brunei has claimed a continental shelf that overlaps a southern reef but has not made any formal claim to the reef. Brunei claims an exclusive economic zone over this area.

Geography :: Spratly Islands

Location:

Southeastern Asia, group of reefs and islands in the South China Sea, about two-thirds of the way from southern Vietnam to the southern Philippines

Geographic coordinates:

8 38 N, 111 55 E

Map references:

Southeast Asia

Area:

total: less than 5 sq km

country comparison to the world: 248

land: less than 5 sq km

water: 0 sq km

note: includes 100 or so islets, coral reefs, and sea mounts scattered over an area of nearly 410,000 sq km of the central South China Sea

Area - comparative:

NA

Land boundaries:

0 km

Coastline:

926 km

Maritime claims:

NA

Climate:

tropical

Terrain:

flat

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: South China Sea 0 m

highest point: unnamed location on Southwest Cay 4 m

Natural resources:

fish, guano, undetermined oil and natural gas potential

Land use:

arable land: 0%

permanent crops: 0%

other: 100% (2011)

Irrigated land:

5,700 sq km (2006)

Natural hazards:

typhoons; numerous reefs and shoals pose a serious maritime hazard

Environment - current issues:

NA

Geography - note:

strategically located near several primary shipping lanes in the central South China Sea; includes numerous small islands, atolls, shoals, and coral reefs

People and Society :: Spratly Islands

Population:

no indigenous inhabitants

note: there are scattered garrisons occupied by military personnel of several claimant states

Government :: Spratly Islands

Country name:

conventional long form: none

conventional short form: Spratly Islands

Economy :: Spratly Islands

Economy - overview:

Economic activity is limited to commercial fishing. The proximity to nearby oil- and gas-producing sedimentary basins suggests the potential for oil and gas deposits, but the region is largely unexplored. There are no reliable estimates of potential reserves. Commercial exploitation has yet to be developed.

Transportation :: Spratly Islands

Airports:

4 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 191

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 3

914 to 1,523 m: 2

under 914 m: 1 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 1

914 to 1,523 m: 1 (2013)

Heliports:

3 (2013)

Ports and terminals:

none; offshore anchorage only

Military :: Spratly Islands

Military - note:

Spratly Islands consist of more than 100 small islands or reefs of which about 45 are claimed and occupied by China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam

Transnational Issues :: Spratly Islands

Disputes - international:

all of the Spratly Islands are claimed by China (including Taiwan) and Vietnam; parts of them are claimed by Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines; despite no public territorial claim to Louisa Reef, Brunei implicitly lays claim by including it within the natural prolongation of its continental shelf and basis for a seabed median with Vietnam; claimants in November 2002 signed the "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea," which has eased tensions but falls short of a legally binding "code of conduct"; in March 2005, the national oil companies of China, the Philippines, and Vietnam signed a joint accord to conduct marine seismic activities in the Spratly Islands