

# USS John S. McCain conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation



Ensign James Bateman, from Huntsville, Ala., scans the horizon utilizing the 'big eyes' while standing watch on the on the bridge wing as the guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) conducts routine underway operations in Peter the Great Bay in the Sea of Japan. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Markus Castaneda

PETER THE GREAT BAY – On Nov. 24 (local time) USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the vicinity of Peter the Great Bay in the Sea of Japan, the U.S. Seventh Fleet said in a release. This freedom of navigation operation (“FONOP”) upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea recognized in international law by challenging Russia’s excessive maritime claims.

In 1984, the U.S.S.R declared a system of straight baselines along its coasts, including a straight baseline enclosing Peter the Great Bay as claimed internal waters. This 106-nautical mile (nm) closing line is inconsistent with the rules of international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention to enclose the waters of a bay. By drawing this closing line, the U.S.S.R. attempted to claim more internal waters – and territorial sea farther from shore – than it is entitled to claim under international law. Russia has continued the U.S.S.R. claim. By conducting this operation, the United States demonstrated that these waters are not Russia’s territorial sea and that the United States does not acquiesce in Russia’s claim that Peter the Great is a “historic bay” under international law.

U.S. forces operate in the Indo-Pacific region on a daily basis, as they have for more than a century. They routinely

operate in close coordination with like-minded allies and partners who share our commitment to uphold a free and open international order that promotes security and prosperity. All of our operations are designed to be conducted in accordance with international law and demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows – regardless of the location of excessive maritime claims and regardless of current events.

The international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention provides for certain rights and freedoms and other lawful uses of the sea to all nations. The United States upholds these rights and freedoms as a matter of principle to preserve the freedom of the seas that is critical to global security, stability, and prosperity. As long as some countries continue to assert maritime claims that are inconsistent with international law as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention and that purport to restrict unlawfully the rights and freedoms enjoyed by all States, the United States will continue to defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all.

The Russian Federation's statement about this mission is false. USS John S. McCain was not "expelled" from any nation's territory. McCain conducted this FONOP in accordance with international law and continued to conduct normal operations in international waters. The operation reflects our commitment to uphold freedom of navigation and lawful uses of the sea as a principle, and the United States will never bow in intimidation or be coerced into accepting illegitimate maritime claims, such as those made by the Russian Federation.