

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 12, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express our grave concern regarding the People's Republic of China's (PRC) escalation of the use of force and coercion against the Philippines in the South China Sea. Your administration must move quickly to support the Philippines in countering China's aggressive behavior.

On June 19, the Philippines attempted to resupply the *BRP Sierra Madre*, a Filipino vessel grounded on a reef near Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea. According to the Philippine military, the PRC's Coast Guard used pickaxes and knives to puncture the Philippine vessels, confiscated the Philippines' equipment, and deployed tear gas to create chaos and confusion during the confrontation.

Your administration has repeatedly stated that an attack on Philippine public vessels, aircraft, and armed forces – including its Coast Guard in the South China Sea – would invoke the U.S. mutual defense commitments under Article IV of the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty. Limiting our response to verbal assurances of the applicability of Article IV undermines the credibility and value of these commitments. We must respond with visible and concrete demonstrations of our support. Anything short of this risks our appearing unwilling to honor our bilateral commitments.

We request your administration provide us with a full list of military, diplomatic, and economic options developed by the Departments of State and Defense to support the Philippines and deter further escalation by the PRC.

As we have promised, the United States must deliver ironclad support to the Philippines in defense of their sovereignty, and we look forward to your response to the above request to ensure that we do so.

Sincerely,


ROGER F. WICKER
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee
on Armed Services


JAMES E. RISCH
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations