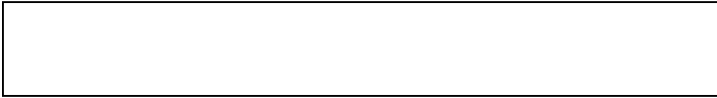
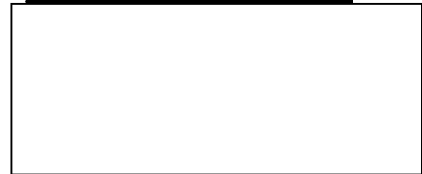




Director of
Central
Intelligence

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CHINA-VIETNAM: Reactions to Tensions in Spratlys

China, since the shooting incident last Monday, has increased the number of warships in the Spratlys from six to as many as nine; Hanoi has called for talks over the disputed islands.

A Chinese destroyer and as many as eight frigates are now operating in the Spratly Islands.

Vietnam yesterday offered to begin negotiations with China over competing claims to the Spratlys. Beijing has not responded, but Vietnamese officials say the Chinese agreed not to obstruct efforts to rescue sailors from the three ships that Hanoi claims were attacked Monday. The Philippines is publicly calling for restraint also.

Malaysia last week began naval patrols near its three outposts in the islands.

Comment: Hanoi's diplomatic overture is probably intended to portray Beijing as a belligerent and to persuade others that China bears primary responsibility for tensions in the islands. Vietnam's military activity since Monday has been limited primarily to additional reconnaissance missions.

The Chinese have a military advantage and are not likely to respond favorably to Vietnam's initiative. Beijing has more warships in the Spratlys now than ever before.

Beijing has not significantly increased its military pressure along the border since the clash on Monday.

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