

Introducing the Republic of China's Taiping Island

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Whether from the perspective of history, geography, or international law, the Tungsha (Pratas) Islands, Shisha (Paracel) Islands, Chungsha Islands (Macclesfield Bank), and Nansha (Spratly) Islands, as well as their surrounding waters, are an inherent part of ROC territory and waters. The ROC enjoys all rights over them in accordance with international law. This is indisputable.

The South China Sea islands were first discovered, named, and used, as well as incorporated into national territory, by the Chinese. Among them, Taiping Island (Itu Aba), with a land area of 0.49 square kilometers, is the largest of the naturally formed islands in the Nansha Islands. In 1946, personnel from the ROC navy vessel *Taiping* reclaimed the island, erecting a stone marker and renaming it Taiping. The San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Treaty of Peace between the ROC and Japan, together with other international legal instruments, confirmed that the islands and reefs in the South China Sea belong to the ROC. Taiping Island has been garrisoned by ROC troops since 1956, and it is currently under the administrative jurisdiction of Kaohsiung City's Qijin District.

Taiping is a habitable island where our people have lived for over 50 years. It is the only one of the Nansha Islands that has fresh water and can sustain economic life of its own, with essential infrastructure in place for water, electricity, agriculture, transportation, and communications. Water is provided through a reverse osmosis desalination system, as well as groundwater wells and water recycling. Electricity comes from diesel generators and a photovoltaic system that generates some 170,000 kilowatts of power per year. A great variety of fruit and vegetables are grown on the island farm.

ROC government improvements to the existing runway and construction of new

piers have made air and sea transportation much more convenient. The Nansha hospital makes high-quality medical care available to sailors of all nations. Postal services, satellite dish antennas, and 2G cellphone towers ensure efficient communications, while the island's meteorological station provides timely weather information for the safety of ships and planes in the South China Sea region. There is also a temple devoted to the Bodhisattva of Compassion and recreation facilities for island residents.

Taiping Island boasts a world-class atoll ecosystem rich in marine resources. Plant and animal life on the island are very diverse, with 106 species of plants and more than 60 types of terrestrial invertebrates. The ROC government has paid special attention to environmental protection, turning the island and its waters into prime feeding grounds for seabirds. Measures are also in place to care for the island's beaches, guaranteeing optimal nesting grounds for green turtles and other protected species.

The ROC has conducted research on the biodiversity, geology, and oceanography of Taiping Island since 2009. Related studies have become important reference material for international research on the natural resources of the South China Sea.

With different countries competing for resources in the region, in May 2015, the ROC proposed the South China Sea Peace Initiative. Through this initiative, it is willing to work with other concerned parties to peacefully resolve disputes based on the principles of safeguarding sovereignty, shelving disputes, pursuing peace and reciprocity, and promoting joint development. The ROC will also continue to work to preserve the natural and cultural assets of Taiping Island, defend the nation's sovereignty, and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the South China Sea.