

The Philippines reverses its policy of friendship with China and the United States builds outlying island bases and deploys them in the Taiwan Strait



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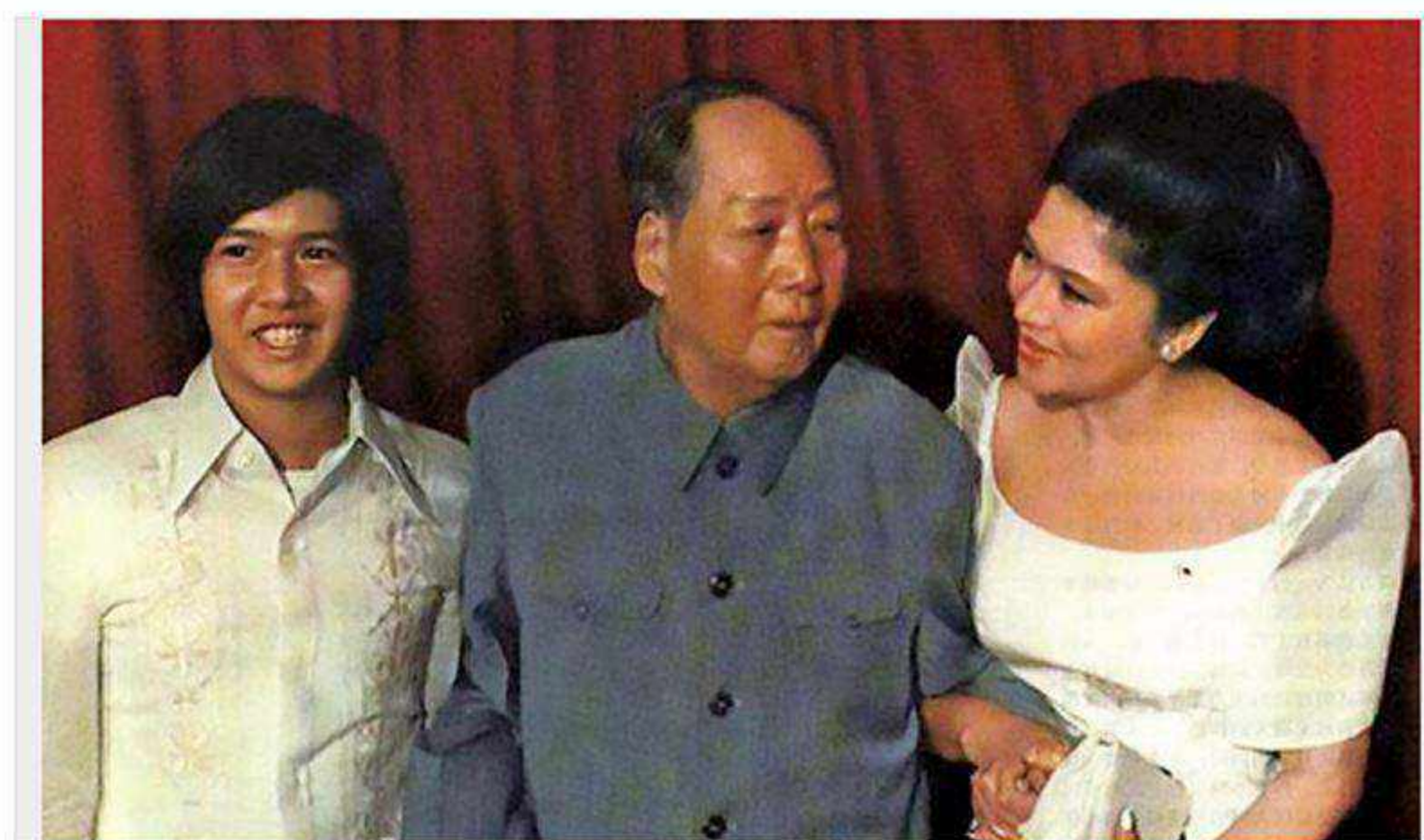
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Did the United States seize Marcos Jr.? (Dai Tianxing)



Philippine President Marcos Jr.: The first foreign head of state to be greeted by the Pentagon with full military salute during the Biden administration (Photo: AFP)

The family of Philippine President Marcos Jr. has a huge amount of money left by Marcos Sr. in the United States, which may exceed tens of billions of dollars, waiting to be unfrozen. In addition, Marcos Sr. has been sued in thousands of lawsuits in the United States. The United States may be able to use this to Affect the layout of the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.

Philippine President Marcos Jr.'s "friendly attitude toward China" when he came to power last year has gradually changed in recent times: military cooperation between the United States and the Philippines has been increasingly strengthened, and conflicts between China and the Philippines are deepening. Some observers pointed out that the Marcos family has huge assets in the United States that are waiting to be unfrozen and may be exploited by the United States and become a "subtle factor" in U.S.-Philippine relations.

Marcos Jr. recently canceled the public holiday commemorating the anniversary of the "People Power" revolution that overthrew Marcos Sr. From a domestic affairs perspective, Philippine human rights organization Karapatan said that deleting the anniversary showed that the Marcos Jr. government was pursuing "meaningful social action for justice, truth and accountability." But from a diplomatic perspective, this was seen as an attempt to downplay the family history. Former Philippine Congressman Walden. "From Washington's perspective, Marcos Jr. was the right person in the right place at the right time," Bello said.

In 1986, Marcos Jr.'s father, former Philippine President Marcos Sr., was overthrown from the dictatorship and went into exile abroad, taking away a large amount of property. According to the Philippine Supreme Court, Marcos Sr. accumulated wealth of up to 100 million during his tenure. Billions of dollars, part of which was later transferred to bank accounts in Switzerland and many high-end properties in Manhattan. In addition, he has large deposits and properties in the United States, Switzerland, Australia, Brazil and other countries. Some estimates indicate that after years of accumulation, the Marcos family's total assets may be as high as \$61 billion.

Philippine media have reported that Marcos Sr.'s wife, Imelda, said that during the reign of Sr. Marcos, the couple controlled many important industries in the Philippine economy, including energy, communications, transportation, media, and even beer and tobacco. The British media "The Guardian" stated that in February 1986, when Marcos Sr. was in exile abroad, he used two C-141 transport planes to load personal belongings. According to official U.S. Customs records at the time, there were twenty-three wooden boxes on board, including twelve suitcases and various boxes. There were enough clothes to fill sixty-seven wardrobes, as well as 413 pieces of jewelry, and A total of \$15 million in new bills (approximately \$42 million today), but it is disputed whether all the items on this U.S. Customs list actually exist, such as a large number of Gold etc.

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Political strife in the Philippines has restricted the diplomatic stance (Dai Tianxing)



Philippine President Marcos Jr. (left) met with US President Biden: Marcos Jr. received a high-level reception (Photo: Reuters)

The overt and covert fighting between Philippine President Marcos Jr. and former President Duterte has affected the Philippines' diplomatic stance. Marcos Jr. sent friendly signals towards China when he took office, but his stance on China changed drastically after his visit to the United States.

When Philippine President Marcos Jr. first came to power, he declared that he would "be a friend to everyone" and sent a friendly signal to China. At the beginning of this year, he visited Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The two had a pleasant conversation and agreed to continue to develop Philippines-China friendship. relationship. However, after Marcos Jr. returned to China, there was a military coup in Manila. It cannot be ruled out that the warning and restriction from the pro-American forces in the military was behind it, which made Marcos Jr. feel that the American forces in the military were enough to subvert his regime.

Rumor has it that the Philippine Army was still controlled by former President Duterte at the time. In order to suppress his power in the military, Marcos Jr. used the "pro-American relations" of many family members to get rid of Duterte's constraints. Marcos Jr. quickly took control of the military by replacing generals loyal to Lao Du in the army and replacing them with his own cronies.

After Lao Du stepped down, he is still active and important in domestic politics. He often flies to Manila to attend special political occasions, including events where he serves as honorary chairman of PDP-Laban. In the weekly TV program "Gikan sa Masa" (From the People), Lao Du often appears together with his "spiritual advisor" host Queboloy. Recently, there is even speculation that Lao Du may return to politics by running for Senate in 2025. The latest PUBLiCUS Asia survey released on September 22 shows that Lao Du is temporarily leading in the senatorial election.

Attitude towards China is at the core of political disputes

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The Philippines reverses its policy of friendship with China and the United States builds outlying island bases and deploys them in the Taiwan Strait (Dai Tianxing)



The Philippines-China ship collision incident on October 22: Photos from the scene from the Chinese perspective (Photo: Reuters)

The recent ship collision between the Philippines and China at Ren'ai Reef marks that the conflict between the Philippines and China is worsening over the sovereignty issue in the South China Sea and has even spread to the situation in the Taiwan Strait. This year, the Philippines will open access to four more military bases to the United States and build a port in the Batanes Islands, only about 100 kilometers south of Taiwan, that can be used to supply and project military power to Taiwan. Behind this is the diplomatic line of Philippine President Marcos Jr. reversed course and sought closer military cooperation with the United States. Marcos Jr.'s family has a large number of assets that are still frozen in the United States, which may be used as bargaining chips by the United States and become a subtle variable in its deployment across the Taiwan Strait.

The recent "ship collision" incident between the Philippines and China at Ren'ai Reef marks that the conflict between the Philippines and China is intensifying and worsening due to the sovereignty issue in the South China Sea, and may even spread to affect the situation in the Taiwan Strait. This year, the Philippines will open access to four more military bases to the United States and build a port in the Batanes Islands, only about 100 kilometers south of Taiwan, that can be used to supply and project military power to Taiwan. Behind this is the diplomatic line of Philippine President Marcos Jr. reversed course and sought closer military cooperation with the United States. Marcos Jr.'s family has a large number of assets that are still frozen in the United States, which may be used as bargaining chips by the United States and become a subtle variable in its deployment across the Taiwan Strait.

At 6:14 on October 22, near Ren'ai Reef, the Philippine yacht "Yunaza May" No. 2 crossed the bow of the Chinese Coast Guard Ship 5203 and had a minor collision under a warning from China. . At 8:13, the Philippine Coast Guard vessel 4409 took the initiative to reverse course and collided with the starboard side of the Qiongsansha Fishing Vessel 00003, which was idle and drifting. The Chinese side accused it of "maliciously causing trouble".

The U.S. State Department immediately issued a statement accusing China. In the context of the deterioration of Sino-US strategic relations, frictions between the Philippines and China continued in various fields, which eventually led to the outbreak of the ship collision incident. Outside Ren'ai Reef, the Philippines has frequently caused trouble in Scarborough Shoal. The Philippine Coast Guard recently stated that it has formulated a plan to "seize" Scarborough Shoal. The competition between the United States, China and the Philippines in the South China Sea will focus on Scarborough Shoal in the short term.

Changed stance after visiting the United States in May

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The Son of Iron Butterfly navigates the political turmoil (Qiu Liben)



Mao Zedong met with Imelda and young Marcos in 1974: they had a great conversation

Ninety-four-year-old Imelda may recall her encounter with Mao Zedong and her unforgettable kiss on the hand when she dreams back in the middle of the night. Unexpectedly, the son of Iron Butterfly was short-sighted and fell into the vortex of the Taiwan Strait, getting lost in the political turmoil of the Sino-US game.

Philippine politics is family politics. Although the current President Marcos Jr.'s family is extremely controversial, it can make a comeback. Behind it is the family's connections and golden connections, and it has a wide range of good relationships.

Imelda, the mother of President Marcos Jr., is a legend in family politics. Her nickname is "Iron Butterfly", showing her steely and invincible spirit. In 1986, her husband, President Marcos, fled to the United States amid embarrassment from all sides, and finally died in a foreign country in Honolulu; many people thought her political life was over. But I didn't expect that she would use the power of family politics to play the tragic card in the elections in her hometown. After many ups and downs, in the end, not only was she elected several times, she was resurrected from the losing side of local politics, and she also allowed her son to continue the dynasty in 2022.

In fact, the situation on both sides of the Taiwan Strait is also swinging. During the Cold War era, she had close relations with Taiwan. She was awarded the Order of the Star by Chiang Kai-shek in 1967, symbolizing the deep friendship between the two sides. But in the 1970s, as the United States changed its policy toward China, the Philippines also followed suit. In 1974, Imelda also visited China with her son Marcos Jr. to meet with Mao Zedong. Mao Zedong, who was already old at the time, passionately kissed the hand of the beautiful Imelda and touched the head of 17-year-old Marcos. The atmosphere was warm and they hugged each other when they parted, showing that China and the Philippines are one Asian nation. Feelings of pulse.

Marcos Jr. later recalled this diplomatic relationship and cherished it. It also made him the only person among today's global leaders who had met Mao Zedong. The charm of Imelda lies in her political resilience and her fearlessness of external ups and downs. Although the opposition criticized her for owning 3,000 pairs of high heels, being ignorant of the sufferings of the people, and saying that she was pampering her autocratic husband, she was still very popular in her hometown and some lower-class societies, and every election mobilization meeting was like a carnival, singing and dancing, harvesting positive political energy and gaining abundant votes.

Now Tie Butterfly's son is also trying to fly in the jungle of power, dealing with the cracks in the game between China and the United States. This is all a power game played by political families. Their wishful thinking is that there are no permanent enemies or permanent friends in diplomacy, only permanent interests.

But the iron butterfly-style power swing may also fall into a lose-lose trap. Marcos Jr. underestimated the power of China and forgot the emotional imprint of his mother's "hand-kissing diplomacy" with Mao Zedong. Instead, he sided with the United States and allowed the U.S. military to build military bases on the Philippine islands close to Taiwan, which was tantamount to intervening in cross-strait disputes.

In the long run, this is definitely against the Philippines' national interests, because the United States' policies towards the Philippines are all about short-term use. From South Vietnam to Afghanistan, the situation started with chaos and ended with abandonment, which was difficult to last. This is actually subject to the electoral politics of the United States. If the president changes, the policy may change. In the end, the Philippines will be involved in the Taiwan Strait war. It can be said that the gain outweighs the loss.

It is said that the son of Iron Butterfly wants to please the United States in order to obtain the unfreezing of the family's frozen property in the United States. However, this is only in the interests of the family, not the national interest of the Philippines. Now ninety-four years old, Imelda may recall her encounter with Mao Zedong and her unforgettable kiss on the hand when she dreams back at midnight. Unexpectedly, the son of Iron Butterfly was short-sighted and fell into the vortex of the Taiwan Strait, getting lost in the political turmoil of the Sino-US game. ■

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The South China Sea is a heart-wrenching conflict between the Philippines and China (Dai Tianxing)



The Sierra Madre stranded on Second Thomas Shoal in 1999: The Philippines continued to replenish supplies, triggering conflicts between the Philippines and China

The centerpiece of the conflict between the Philippines and China is the landing ship Sierra Madre, which ran aground on Second Thomas Shoal (known as Ayungin in the Philippines) in 1999. The Philippines has been dispatching military personnel regularly to change shifts and deliver supplies for a long time to exercise actual control. Ren'ai Reef is about 200 kilometers away from the Philippines' Palawan Island and about 30 kilometers away from the Chinese Mischief Reef artificial island. China has repeatedly requested the Philippines to move the Sierra Madre on the grounds that Ren'ai Reef is part of China's Nansha Islands.

The Philippines accused China of dispatching six coast guard ships on August 5 to launch high-pressure water jets in the South China Sea, and with the assistance of two maritime militia ships, China used dangerous actions to intercept Philippine coast guard ships and supply ships. The Armed Forces of the Philippines stated that if China forcibly tows away the Sierra Madre, the Philippines is prepared to defend its position.

Brauner, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said that he is considering deploying more ships and aircraft in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone to counter China's power in the West Philippine Sea. "It's not just about being vigilant in this area, we have to establish our presence here. Conflict is going to intensify here."

Several senators in the Philippines urged the government to demand an explanation from China and drew the attention of the international community to China's "harassment of Philippine fishermen" in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. They also used international forums to gain multilateral support for the implementation of the Hague ruling. Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Dasa said the incident undermined efforts to build mutual trust and trust and brought tension to bilateral relations. Dasha said Manila has lodged 445 diplomatic protests with Beijing since 2020, 35 of which were lodged this year.

The United States, Europe and Japan have accused China

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