

Two Chinese diplomats killed in the Philippines

Joseph Santolan
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Two Chinese diplomats were killed and the consul general was wounded by gunshots in a restaurant in Cebu City, Philippines, on Wednesday afternoon. While many details of the event are still unknown, the fatal shooting occurs during a period of explosive tensions between China and the Philippines which have been provoked by Washington's drive to isolate and encircle China throughout the region.

Initial details made available to the press reveal that Song Ronghua, the Chinese consul general in Cebu, was shot through the neck during the attack but was declared to be in a stable condition in a hospital.

Two of Song's aides, Deputy Consul-General Sun Shan and finance officer Hui Li were killed by gunfire.

The shooting occurred in a private room of the Lighthouse restaurant in Cebu City, an establishment reportedly popular among local politicians. The guests in the room were celebrating Song Ronghua's 53rd birthday.

Authorities claim that CCTV footage from the restaurant reveals that during a performance of Happy Birthday by local musicians a Chinese citizen who was attending the celebration stood up and opened fire with a semi-automatic Colt .45 pistol. The shooter then exited the room along with a female companion.

Cebu City Police arrested two suspects. They identified the male as Li Qinglong, and his companion as his wife, Gou Jing, who is a consular official. As a result, both have diplomatic passports and are claiming diplomatic immunity.

A number of news reports claimed that "Song and Li were said to be embroiled in an argument before the shooting took place."

Li Lingxiao, a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Manila, informed the AFP via text message that "Our embassy is still verifying the facts. We'll update

you as soon as I have anything new."

Whatever its immediate cause, the incident occurs in the midst of tense relations between Manila and Beijing. Any mishandling of the case by local authorities has the potential to provoke a far broader international incident.

Superintendent Romeo Santander, chief of the Cebu City police intelligence branch, told reporters that the police would be "following protocol" in dealing with this case involving high-profile persons. He stated that the case is "a matter of national security."

Since he took office as consul general several months ago, Song Ronghua's primary task has been public relations damage control, trying to cope with the spiraling tensions deliberately being stoked by Washington.

Speaking at a conference in the Philippines a month ago, Song tried to downplay the deteriorating state of relations between the two countries, telling the Philippine press that China and the Philippines have "no excuses to quarrel."

Washington is laboring to manufacture precisely such a quarrel, providing itself a pretext for its drive to war with China. It has pushed the Philippines to file a legal case against China's territorial claim in the South China Sea before the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea. The case which Manila filed was drawn up and argued by a team of attorneys from Washington DC.

Washington has brokered arrangements for the basing of US forces in the Philippines—approval of the deal is currently pending before the Philippine Supreme Court.

And in what can only be characterized as blatant warmongering, Washington has indicated that it is preparing to sail its naval vessels or fly military aircraft within the 12 nautical mile limit of China's claimed

territories and facilities in the South China Sea.

These actions have stoked up an atmosphere of anti-Chinese hysteria in the Philippines, particularly among sections of the petty-bourgeoisie. The government of Philippine President Benigno Aquino has produced a series of propaganda videos denouncing China's role in the South China Sea as that of a neighborhood thief, who is robbing the wealth of Filipinos, particularly Filipino fishermen.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has documented, the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines is playing a leading role in this warmongering, going so far as to call for anti-Chinese pogroms within the Philippines.

The day of the shooting in Cebu, the group Filipinos United for Sovereignty (P1NAS) held its founding congress. P1NAS is headed by a group of bourgeois politicians with long-established ties to Washington. It was formed at the instigation of the front organizations of the CPP.

It called on "patriotic Filipinos" to defend "Philippine sovereignty" from the claws of the Dragon, meaning China.

Tensions have reached a fever pitch. The shooting of the Chinese consul general and his aides in Cebu City raises the possibility that a diplomatic misstep or a deliberate provocation could cause relations between Manila and Beijing to become potentially even more explosive.



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