Based on Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, the United States should employ strategies that “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.” and focus on shaping the strategic environment to prevent conflict escalation in the Spratly Islands (Sun Tzu, [Quotes](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1771.Sun_Tzu), ~500BC). Sun Tzu emphasizes that supreme excellence lies in breaking the enemy's resistance without direct confrontation—a principle that can guide American actions in this volatile situation. We should spearhead a diplomatic initiative under the auspices of ASEAN, encouraging all parties to agree to a temporary freeze on new occupations and military activities in the disputed region. This initiative should aim to foster dialogue, reduce tensions, and create a framework for resolving disputes. A neutral, multilateral platform aligns with Sun Tzu’s advice to avoid predictable and isolating maneuvers. Additionally, the U.S. should enhance its intelligence-sharing mechanisms with regional allies, providing situational awareness to deter opportunistic actions. Sun Tzu advocates that “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.” Improved information can reduce the confusion of crisis for allies and ensure coordinated responses. Finally, visible but restrained military posturing, such as deploying U.S. Navy assets for Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) and humanitarian exercises, can reinforce international norms and signal commitment to stability. This calculated display of power echoes Sun Tzu’s maxim: “Appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend; march swiftly to places where you are not expected.” By combining diplomatic, informational, and military tools, the U.S. can promote de-escalation and demonstrate leadership, consistent with Sun Tzu’s principles of indirect warfare.