Latest US Navy collision with cargo ship prompts safety concerns

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Beijing voiced concerns on Monday about "threats or hidden risks" to navigation safety in the South China Sea and related waters after a US Navy guided missile destroyer collided with a merchant vessel near Singapore.  
The collision of USS John S. McCain and the oil tanker Alnic MC took place in waters east of the Straits of Malacca early Monday and left 10 crew members of the destroyer missing and another five injured, Xinhua reported.  
Experts noted this is the second US warship collision in two months and the US Freedom of Navigation Program－involving intrusions into China's territorial waters in the South China Sea have given rise to safety issues.  
In mid-June, the USS Fitzgerald guided missile destroyer collided with the cargo ship ACX Crystal off the coast of Japan, resulting in the deaths of seven US Navy sailors.  
China hopes the issue will be properly handled, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said on Monday afternoon.  
Beijing has taken note of the report on the new collision, and it hopes the missing personnel are in good condition, Hua said at a daily news conference in Beijing.  
Significant damage to the hull of the McCain resulted in flooding into nearby compartments, and "damage control efforts by the crew halted further flooding", the US Navy said on its website on Monday afternoon.  
The destroyer has arrived at Changi Naval Base in Singapore, and search and rescue efforts continue in coordination with local authorities, the US Navy said.  
Teng Jianqun, director of the Department for American Studies at China Institute of International Studies, said the collision occurred in a time in which the US Navy has engaged in belligerent sailing in the South China Sea.  
Given that the US Navy has often navigated the Straits of Malacca, the incident could indicate potential technical problems with the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, Teng added.  
The Ministry of National Defense confirmed on Aug 3 that China's Navy had coordinated with a US search for a sailor who fell overboard from a US warship sailing in the South China Sea 100 nautical miles southwest of China's Huangyan Island.

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