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In a statement, China's Defense Ministry repeated that development on the islands was mainly for civilian purposes, but added that defensive measures were "appropriate and legal."

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"For example, were someone to be threatening you with armed force outside your front door, would you not get ready even a slingshot?" the ministry statement said.

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Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters at a daily briefing that he had no information about the reported weaponry, but said such deployments were China's sovereign right.

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