

《外交部：西沙群岛是中国固有领土》

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A Chinese oil rig that was at the center of the recent row between China and Vietnam has finished its operations and been relocated. China says the rig was due to be closed anyway. It had been operating in an area of the South China Sea that's claimed by both China and Vietnam. The row sparked a number of clashes, both at sea, and inside Vietnam, where Chinese businesses and citizens were targeted.

Over two months after deploying its rig, the China National Petroleum Corp. finished its drilling in the South China Sea. Signs of oil and gas were detected in the area called the Zhongjiannan basin. It's an area that the company has been exploring since 2004.

"When we started the project in 2004, we wanted to evaluate the oil reserves of the whole South China Sea, especially in the Zhongjiannan basin, which is a key area.," Qiu Zhongjian, geologist with Chinese Academy Of Engineering, said.

A preliminary analysis of the geological data in the basin was done, but more information will be needed.

"The area has the basic conditions and potential for oil exploration, but extraction testing cannot begin before a comprehensive assessment of the data is done," Qiu said.

If enough gas is found and the area put into production, China will have its first energy field in the South China Sea.

The drilling process was disrupted by Vietnam, who sent armed boats to the location of the oil rig, claiming that the Chinese company was operating in their waters.

But the claim was strongly opposed by China.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei reiterated China's stance on the issue.

The Xisha islands are an inherent part of China. Chinese companies were operating in waters off the islands, totally within China's jurisdiction, it is a domestic issue. China strongly opposes any unreasonable disruption from Vietnam regarding the drilling of the Chinese enterprise. China has taken necessary measures for the safe operation of the drilling.

The drilling rig will move on to another project southeast of Hainan island.