

# Malaysian Pioneers in the Spratly Islands

# The Untold Stories

Captain Mat Taib Yasin RMN (Ret)  
Captain Azhar Abdul Rahman RMN (Ret)  
Captain Johari Ramzan Ahmad RMN (Ret)

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# An Untold Tale of Resolve, Sacrifices and heroism

Why would Malaysia, a peace-loving nation deploy its naval forces in the 80's to secure a contested area in the South China Sea (SCS), an action that may be construed as belligerent by littoral states that have interests in the same area. What were the reasons and considerations that influenced Malaysia's daring move that may result in dire military and/or diplomatic ramifications.

Malaysia's bold stance towards claiming and physically occupying the GSP would not have been taken, even initiated, if not for his vision and determination. Hardly warming his seat as the premier, Mahathir "summoned the resolve" to order the RMN in August 1981 to occupy Terumbu Layang-Layang (Swallow Reef), upon which the first offshore station was built followed by four more stations on other islands of the GSP built at his behest.

How they endured and survived the elements; blazing sun, gale force winds and treacherous seas? Besides the said physical challenges, they were also haunted by psychological nightmare of being confined on a remote and tiny island away from civilization and love ones, exacerbated by poor living conditions and unpredictable logistical supports.

The deed had not only reinforced Malaysia's territorial sovereignty and control of the area, but also access to the rich oil and gas fields within its claimed Continental Shelf waters. Most of the deep water wells off the coasts of Sabah and Sarawak which contribute substantial percentage to Malaysia's GNP are incidentally located within this body of water. Malaysia had made the right decision to occupy GSP.

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