

Filipino soldiers fought off Chinese coast guard 'with bare hands'

Philippines soldiers used their "bare hands" to fight off Chinese coast guard personnel armed with swords, spears and knives in the disputed South China Sea, the country's top military commander has said.

General Romeo Brawner accused Chinese vessels of ramming Philippine boats, then boarding them and seizing weapons.

One Filipino soldier lost a thumb when his vessel was rammed, the general said. China denied its personnel were to blame, saying they had been "restrained".

There have been a string of dangerous encounters as the two sides seek to enforce their claims on disputed reefs and outcrops - this appears to be an escalation.

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