Beat: Politics

South Korea voices regret over shooting death of Chinese fisherman

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USPA News - South Korea`s foreign minister expressed regret Friday over the death of a Chinese fisherman during a coastguard operation against illegal fishing in South Korean waters. But he insisted that the man had used lethal weapons to threaten the officers.

The incident took place on Tuesday afternoon when around 30 Chinese vessels were illegally fishing in South Korean waters of the Yellow Sea. As South Korean authorities approached one of the vessels, the Chinese fisherman challenged the officers, threatening them with knives, axes, and other weapons. A South Korean Coast Guard officer responded to the allegedly violent threats by shooting the Chinese fisherman, critically injuring him. The fisherman, identified only by his surname Zhang, died hours later after being airlifted to a hospital in the South Korean port city of Mokpo. South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan on Friday nonetheless expressed his regret over the incident. "It was regrettable that the incident happened during a crackdown against illegal fishing by Chinese vessels," he was quoted as saying by the Yonhap news agency. "But it should be understood that there was a violent resistance." The comments Friday came as Chinese Ambassador Zhang Xinsen met with South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Ahn Ho-young to voice Beijing`s concern over the incident. Seoul`s foreign ministry spokesman earlier this week also expressed regret, offering condolences to the fisherman`s family, regardless of who was responsible.

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