

The Grounding of the *USS Guardian* at the Tubbataha Reefs: A Framework of the Supreme Court Case, *Most Rev. Pedro D. Arigo, Vicar Apostolic of Puerto Princesa, et. al v. Scott H. Swift, in His Capacity as Commander of the U.S. 7th Fleet.*

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The Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is known as one of the most valuable wonders of nature within Philippine territory. It is likewise known as one of the most famous diving spots in the world because of its beautiful corals and reefs. In January 17, 2013, a U.S. Navy ship called the *USS Guardian*, ran aground the TRNP structure, thereby causing massive environmental damage to the ecosystem and marine life contained therein. On April 17, 2013, a group of environmentalists, advocates, and lawyers filed a Petition before the Supreme Court against the Commander of the 7th fleet, U.S. Navy, in order to make said agency accountable for the damage caused to the TRNP. To date, said Petition is still pending with the Supreme Court *en banc*.

The Comment looks into the various legal issues that surround the grounding. The Author seeks to shed light on the legal arguments presented by the Petition, and discusses the different ways in which the U.S. Navy may be held accountable for the grounding under international law. The Comment provides detail on the variety of jurisprudence, both noted within Philippine jurisdiction and abroad, which may be used as basis for the liability of the U.S. Navy because of the grounding.

The Comment highlights the value of the marine life and the ecosystem on Philippine tourism and the national economy. It likewise provides information on the marine life affected and damaged by the grounding of the *USS Guardian*. Since Petition is still pending with the Supreme Court, the Author can only hope that the upcoming Decision will provide significant foundation for environmental law disputes in the Philippines.