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Indian Navy's MILAN '18: Towards Steadier Waters in Indo-Pacific

C Uday BhaskarUpdated: 07.03.18

India is hosting its week-long biennial naval engagement, **MILAN 2018**, in Port Blair on Tuesday, 6 March, and 16 navies from across the Indo-Pacific oceanic continuum will be a part of this demonstration of maritime camaraderie. The first **MILAN** (meaning 'get together' in Hindi) was held in 1995, and emerged from a consensus that the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), with its disparate nations – big and small – could be envisioned as a community with a common objective; this being the security and stability of the extended regional maritime domain.

Towards Maritime Good-Order & Steady Regional Ties

One recalls the concept of an Indian Ocean '*panchayat'* being mooted by the Indian Navy in the early 1990s at an international conference held in Delhi and this later took the shape of the first 'MILAN' in 1995, where four regional navies were hosted by India in Port Blair. Over the years, '**MILAN'** has acquired a distinctive profile, in that it brings together a wide swathe from across the maritime arc encompassing Asia and the eastern seaboard of Africa for a week of professional engagement, sports fixtures and deliberations at the flagship seminar that the tri-service Andaman & Nicobar Command hosts. Regional geo-politics cannot be divorced from such events and given the sequence of developments related to the Maldives over the last few months, the island nation has conveyed its inability to join '**MILAN 2018'**. However, the other nations include Australia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Vietnam, Thailand, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya and Cambodia. The theme of this year's 'MILAN' seminar is 'In Pursuit of Maritime Good Order: Need for Comprehensive Information Sharing Apparatus' and it is expected that the deliberations will distill some inputs for policy formulation towards nurturing maritime 'good order' and enhancing regional cooperation for combating unlawful activities at sea.

Facing an Assertive China

The subtext of the challenges posed to the prevailing consensus about the contour of maritime '*good order'* and the stability of the global commons is symbolised by China and its provocative actions in the South China Sea. The post Cold War (1992) international global strategic framework is a largely US-led template and the last quarter century has been shaped by this orientation. This is now being contested by an authoritarian Beijing and a differently turbulent-petulant-inconsistent Trump administration is contributing to the dismay and disarray in the liberal-democratic cluster. Against the reality of an assertive China (which has just increased its defence budget to USD 175 billion), India is perceived as a democratic bulwark in Asia but of a lesser comprehensive national capability – both economic and military. China has a GDP that is almost four times that of India and this is reflected in the military sector also. At USD 175 billion for its defence budget, China is now second only to the USA, which allocates close to USD 700 billion for the Pentagon's global military machine.

China's Increasing Footprint

The maritime domain, with specific reference to the extended Indo-Pacific, is now the focus of a latent contest and competition between China and the US-led regional alliance, that includes Japan, South Korea, Australia and an uneasy ASEAN. It is against this backdrop that '**MILAN'** acquires a certain specificity, where the symbolism is inversely proportional to the substantive content of the 16 navies meeting under one umbrella. As former prime minister Manmohan Singh had once noted in a pithy manner – the world wants India to emerge and grow strong. The contrast with the anxiety triggered by the rise of an assertive China is palpable across South East Asia. This unease is now spreading to Africa and Australasia too, where the scale of the Chinese footprint and the intensity of its penetration in various domestic sectors, including shaping the political domain in Beijing's favour, is leading to increasing consternation. The theme of '**MILAN 2018'** is a combination of the imperative of ensuring 'good order' at sea and the need to share information in a comprehensive manner. The participants include distant nations such as Kenya, Tanzania and New Zealand, apart from other navies who have been part of '**MILAN'** for the last two decades. This mix is indicative of the politico-diplomatic comfort level that a democratic India induces in an existential manner.

Steering Towards Steadier Waters in Indo-Pacific Region

China and its comprehensive profile are part of a reality that Asia and the rest of the world are coming to grips with in a varying manner. It would be invalid to suggest that the response to an assertive Beijing, under an extended '*Emperor'* Xi Jinping tenure, must be a binary option of creating an anti-China coalition led by the USA and the western alliance.

But signalling to Beijing that other permutations and combinations (not devoid of a latent political and strategic import) are feasible, is a prudent path, and **MILAN 2018** could be interpreted as steering such a course. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have both exuded a certain maritime affinity in their policy formulations. If Xi is associated with the ambitious BRI (belt-road initiative), Modi has advocated SAGAR (security and growth for all regionally) in the IOR, as also an Asia-Africa corridor with Japan as a major partner. Harmonising these initiatives in a consensual and cooperative manner could lay the foundation for a less discordant Indo-Pacific community – 16 of whose members will steam away from Port Blair on 13 March at the concluding Pasex (passage exercise), till they congregate again at the next **MILAN in 2020**.

(The writer is a leading expert on strategic affairs. He is currently Director, Society for Policy Studies. He can be reached at @theUdayB. This is an opinion piece and the views expressed above are the author's own. The Quint neither endorses nor is responsible for the same.) **Source: https://www.thequint.com**

China's plans for nuclear aircraft carriers represents new global military aspirations

By Alex Hollings 03.06.2018

Feature image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

For many people within the United States, geopolitics tend to take a back seat to the trending domestic issues of the day. With a polarizing figure leading the Executive Branch and each party hardening their positions from attack, it can be easy to lose sight of issues like America's diplomatic leverage. The ability to exert influence on a global scale requires a number of different important focuses maintained in a form of equilibrium. A powerful military presence in a region will certainly bolster the chances that a foreign government will take your concerns seriously, but that strength must be tempered with an apparent willingness to talk, mediate, and negotiate. This is why the historic one-two punch of America's Defense and State Departments have long relied on one another to keep the nation's international standing where it needs to be. In order to exert that same sort of diplomatic leverage *globally*, the same ingredients are required, but spread out over a much larger swath of territory. The immense cost associated with having *both* a formidable military *and* diplomatic presence the world over is so dramatic, in fact, that today, only one nation maintains that capacity: the United States. However, that singular distinction may soon come to an end, as China rapidly moves to expand their own military capabilities to match their own trade-based diplomatic power. A statement released by China's primary government owned ship building outfit, the China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation, or CSIC, last week stated in no uncertain terms that the organization is moving ahead with plans to develop and build a nuclear powered aircraft carriers to add to China's growing People's Liberation Army Navy, or PLAN. Currently, China employs a single fully operational carrier, the ***Liaoning***, a Soviet era leftover and sister ship to Russia's ***Admiral Kuznetsov***. Another, more advanced carrier dubbed the Type 001 is nearing an operational status, doubling China's carrier fleet, with more vessels of the same class on their way – but the steam boiler power plants employed in theses ships require frequent refueling, limiting the range of the vessels and requiring global refueling agreements in order to deploy to distant regions. The United States' carrier fleet, on the other hand, relies on nuclear reactors that can go decades without a top off. This allows the United States to maintain carrier group-sized military presences in regions all around the globe, supporting American diplomacy with Theodore Roosevelt's proverbial "*big stick*," and relying on foreign governments for very little. According to the release that was then retracted and modified to remove mentions of China's own nuclear aspirations, CSIC promised to *"redouble efforts to achieve technological breakthroughs in nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, new nuclear-powered submarines, quieter conventionally powered submarines, underwater artificial intelligence-based combat systems and integrated networked communications systems."* The revised release instead states CSIC "*must resolutely implement (Chinese President) Xi Jinping's thinking on strengthening our armed forces and take the building of a modern warfare system with Chinese characteristics as a guide to speed up breakthroughs in key core technologies*." This new emphasis on nuclear powered carriers represents a shift in strategic methodology, away from their current green-water approach, with an emphasis placed on China's littoral zones and nearby open ocean. A new blue-water Navy focused not only on global reach, but on maintaining a global *presence*, seems to be on the horizon. Such a move would certainly be in keeping with China's efforts to modernize and restructure their military while fielding more advanced platforms like their home built destroyers and the 5th Generation J-20 fighter. As America sees its influence overseas begin to falter, China is rapidly moving to assume the role of global diplomatic leader – and now, it seems, they're working to develop their own "*big stick*" to back that up. **Source: https://sofrep.com**

India seeks global power status: Pentagon

06 March 2018 Last Updated at 10:16 pm

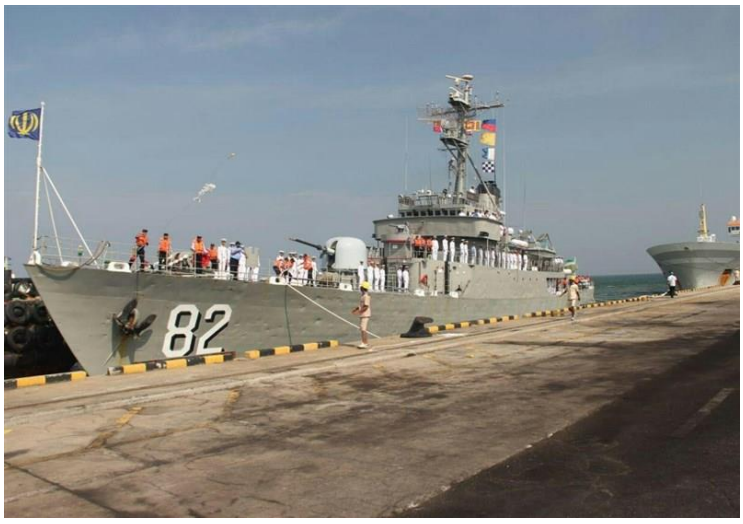
By Lalit K Jha

Washington, Mar 6 India seeks status as a global power, the Pentagon's top intelligence chief told US lawmakers today, adding that as such New Delhi perceives its strategic forces as necessary elements to achieve that goal. India has put its first domestically built nuclear submarine, the **INS *Arihant***, into service, and is set to take delivery of its second nuclear sub, the INS Arighat, in 2018, Lt Gen Robert Ashley, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. "*New Delhi seeks status as a global power and perceives its strategic forces as necessary elements to achieve that goal*," Ashley said. He said India continues to modernise its military to better posture itself to defend its interests at home and in the broader Indian Ocean region while reinforcing its diplomatic and economic outreach across Asia. "*Continued exchange of heavy fire between Indian and Pakistani forces along the Line of Control poses a risk of inadvertent or gradual escalation of hostilities*," he said. In 2017, the lengthy Dokalam standoff between Indian and Chinese forces along the Bhutan-China border heightened tension between India and China and prompted both sides to increase their forces near the Line of Actual Control, he added. "*We expect that both sides will maintain this elevated force posture along disputed border areas through the remainder of 2018*," Ashley said. On Pakistan, he said Islamabad is likely to proceed with its counterinsurgency operations and border management efforts along its western border while sustaining counterterrorism and paramilitary operations throughout the country. These efforts have had some success in reducing violence from militant, sectarian, terrorist, and separatist groups, but Pakistan will look to the US and the Afghan government for support against anti-Pakistan fighters in Afghanistan, he added. "*Pakistan is increasing its nuclear stockpile and developing tactical nuclear weapons and new ballistic missile systems. In January 2017, Pakistan conducted the first test launch of its nuclear-capable Ababeel ballistic missile, demonstrating South Asia's first MIRV payload, and in early July, Pakistan demonstrated an expanded-range Nasr CRBM,"* Ashley said. He said Chinese military forces continue to develop capabilities to dissuade, deter, or defeat potential third party intervention during a large-scale theatre campaign, such as a Taiwan contingency. China's military modernisation plan includes the development of capabilities to conduct long-range attacks against adversary forces that might deploy or operate in the western Pacific Ocean. These capabilities, spanning the air, maritime, space, electromagnetic, and information domains, are most robust within the first island chain, but China is rapidly extending capabilities farther into the Pacific Ocean. According to Ashley, China's expanding global footprint and international interests are reflected in its Belt and Road Initiative of economic, commercial, and infrastructure projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. "*Beijing's military modernisation programme is expanding in concert with this initiative to include investments and infrastructure to support a range of missions beyond China's periphery, including power projection, sea lane security, counterpiracy, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief*," he said. China's most recent white papers and doctrinal writings emphasise the requirement for an army to be able to secure expanding Chinese national interests overseas, including a growing emphasis on the importance of the maritime domain, offensive air operations, long-distance mobility operations, space operations, and cyber-operations. "*In August, following more than a year of construction, China officially opened a military base in Djibouti and deployed a company of marines and equipment to the facility. China probably will seek to establish additional military logistics facilities in countries with which it has longstanding, friendly relationships and similar strategic interests*," he said. **Source: https://www.outlookindia.com**

Iranian Naval Fleet Berths at Indian Port

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Iranian Navy's 50th flotilla of warships docked at India's port of Mumbai on Tuesday as part of efforts to boost military ties between the navies of the two countries.

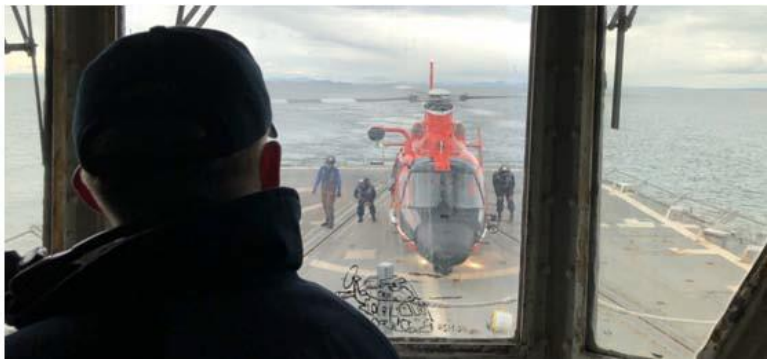
March, 06, 2018 - 17:53



According to the Navy's public relations office, the operational-training naval fleet, comprising ***Shahid Naghdi*** and ***Bayandor*** destroyers and ***Tonb*** logistic-military warship, has traveled to Mumbai to convey the message of peace and friendship and enhance the relations between Iran and India. During their four-day stay in India, the commanders of the flotilla are planned to meet with senior Indian military officials. There will also be visits to a number of training centers of the Indian Navy as well as cultural and historical sites of the South Asian country. In recent years, Iran's naval forces have increased their presence in international waters to secure naval routes and protect merchant vessels and oil tankers against pirates.

Source: https://www.tasnimnews.com

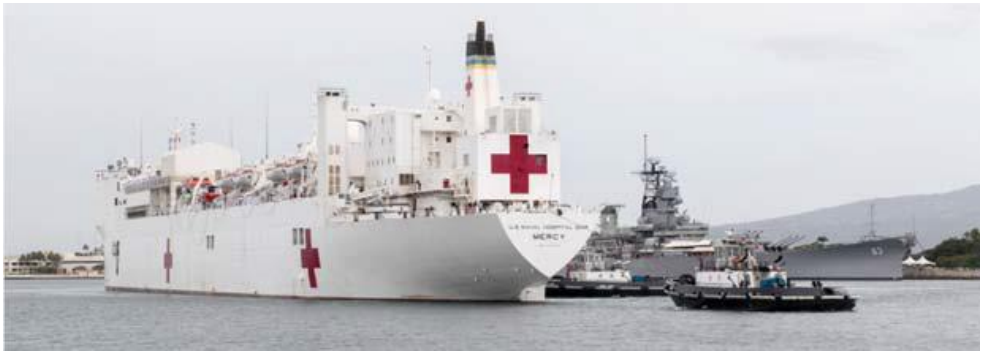
Coast Guard medevacs Navy sailor off of U.S.S. *Kidd* in Straits of Juan de Fuca



The Coast Guard conducted a medical evacuation of a sick Navy sailor aboard the **USS *Kidd*,** which was transiting the Straits of Juan de Fuca, Sunday afternoon. The sailor was picked up by an aircrew aboard an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Port Angeles and flown to **Naval Air Station Whidbey Island** where they were met by emergency medical services and transported to Island General Hospital for further care. Watchstanders at Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound received the medevac request from the command of the **USS *Kidd***, a Naval destroyer homeported in San Diego, at 1:44 p.m. The Port Angeles aircrew arrived on scene at 3:20 p.m. and landed aboard the ship to pick up the sailor.The sailor, a 23-year-old male, was in stable condition at the time of transport.

Source: Maasmond Maritime

USNS *Mercy* stops in Hawaii en route for Pacific Partnership



The Military Sealift Command hospital ship **USNS *Mercy* (T-AH 19)** arrived at **Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Hawaii**, March 3, while en route for Pacific Partnership 2018. During the visit, Pacific Partnership personnel will work side-by-side with local medical professionals to promote the mission, conducting routine maintenance, and load additional supplies onto the ship. "*Our team is excited to welcome more members of the Pacific Partnership mission on board as well as on loading additional mission supplies*" said Capt. David Bretz, the mission commander. After this port call, we will meet up with our partner ship **USNS *Fall River*** in Guam and be one step closer to our first mission stops." During Pacific Partnership, Mercy and Military Sealift Command expeditionary fast transport **USNS *Fall River* (T-EPF 4),** the U.S. ships participating in this year's mission, will visit different Indo-Pacific nations, increasing the reach and scope of the mission's participants and host nation counterparts to conduct technical expertise exchanges in medical, engineering, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). Additionally, key leader and community engagement events will allow for direct engagement with local citizens and enhanced relationships with partner nation military and government leadership. Pacific Partnership, now in its 13th iteration, is the largest annual multilateral HA/DR preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific. The mission's objective is to enhance regional coordination in areas such as medical readiness and preparedness for man-made and natural disasters. Pacific Partnership 2018 consists of more than 500 U.S. military personnel stationed worldwide, working side-by-side with host nation counterparts to be better prepared for potential humanitarian aid and disaster response situations.

source: Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Indonesia investigates human remains from plundered warships

By Richard Wood

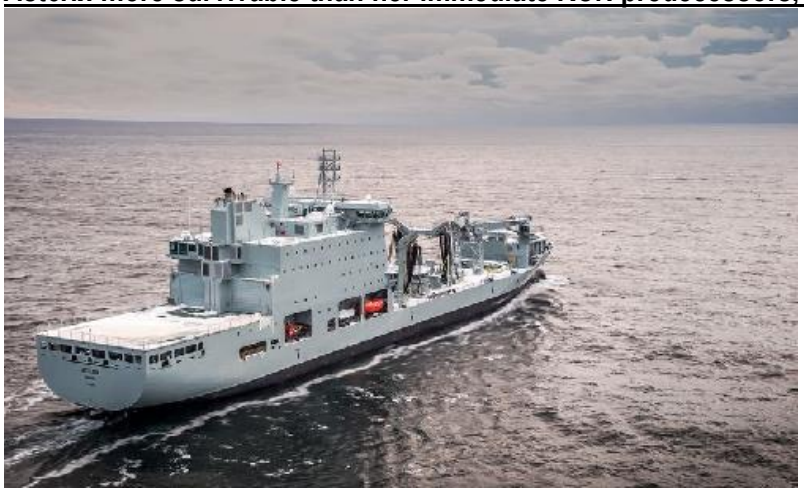
It's been called the world's largest grave robbery.

Over the past three years, dozens of World War II warships sunk off Indonesia in 1942 have been pillaged by scrap metal hunters. But now it's been revealed as well as metal, the body parts of British and Dutch sailors, have been brought ashore in East Java. Last month, The Guardian reported welders in the port of Brondong finding human remains as they cut through the twisted steel from the sunken ships. They included leg and arm bones, skulls and teeth. Boots, pistols, rifles, cutlery and compasses were also found. Now the Australian diving expert who has surveyed Dutch, British, US and Australian warships wrecks sunk in World War II has told Nine.com.au of his reaction. In 2016, Andrew Fock led a diving expedition to film and survey the Dutch warships lost during the Java Sea campaign against invading Japanese forces in 1942. The survey established widespread salvaging was taking place on an industrial scale – two warships **HNLMS *De Ruyter*** and **HNLMS *Java*** had vanished, while many parts of a third vessel, **HNLMS *Kortenaer*** had been plundered. Divers also found three British vessels – **HMS *Electra*, HMS *Encounter*** and **HMS *Exeter*** had been heavily salvaged for their scrap metal. "*I'm certainly not surprised to hear reports of body parts being found among the salvaged metal*," Dr Fock said. "*We saw remains on the side of **HMS Exeter** in 2016. She had a crew of about 700 when she went down*." Indonesian media outlets report that some of the remains of the British and Dutch sailors have been taken to a mass grave in a village near Brondong. The

burial site is now part of an investigation being carried out by Indonesian authorities and Dutch embassy staff, reports The Guardian. Last year a diving expedition found 60percent of the Australian light cruiser **HMAS *Perth*** also sunk in 1942 had vanished. Evidence of large-scale scrap metal salvaging had been found. It is not known what has become of the remains of the ship's crew. Naval ship wrecks contain a large amount of scrap metal with a high resale value. Among the most prized target for scrap metal merchants are the vessels' propellers. Diving expeditions have found evidence of salvaging on a commercial scale using sophisticated technology. On some wreck sites a giant 200-tonne hammer-like device has been used to smash the wrecks on the sea bed.The tangled remains are then scooped up by a dredger that leaves the tell-tale print of a giant claw on the seabed. **source : Nine Digital Pty Ltd 2018**

The 2016 commissioned Hellenic Navy Type 214 submarine **S122 HS *Matrozos*** berthed at Banchina 12 West, Porto Di Catania, Sicily on Friday 2nd March 2018. She's one of the 6 Submarines to take part of the **Dynamic Manta Exercise 2018**.
Photo : Capt. Lawrence Dalli - www.maltashipphotos.com (c)

***Asterix* more survivable than her immediate RCN predecessors, says institute**



Asterix on Maiden Voyage from Quebec City to Halifax. **Photo: CNW Group/Davie Shipbuilding**

There has recently been a flurry of discussion about the Asterix, the new supply ship being leased by the federal government to support the Royal Canadian Navy. The ship is expected to see much use as the RCN no longer has any supply ships of its own. But there was some discussion about whether ***Asterix***, a commercial vessel converted to a supply ship configuration, could be used in a combat zone. The RCN says no. That is because the ship does not carry defensive weapons. The company behind ***Asterix***, Davie Shipbuilding, says the ship can be used in a war zone. So how would a supply ship be used in a conflict? Would it normally go into combat or stay on the outer perimeters of a conflict zone? Is ***Asterix*** much different from the RCN's previous class of supply ships? I turned to the Navy League of Canada for those answers. They weren't of any help though and instead responded with a talking point that looked like it had been approved by the government (the league was confident the RCN would not send forces into harm's way without proper preparation.) Thankfully the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia was able to provide information that the Navy League couldn't. Colin Darlington, a retired commander in the Royal Canadian Navy, who is now vice president of the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia sent this information in a background paper on the subject:

1. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has previously deployed contracted employees in dangerous areas (recall the very-Canadian Tim Horton's in Afghanistan).
2. Whilst **Asterix**'s first line of defence is not to be put in harm's way, that can be done at a tactical (local) level, not precluding her deployment into a danger zone (which tend to be wide area).
3. **Asterix**'s best defence is an escort (e.g., frigate), as it is for any logistics ship.
4. ***Asterix*** lacks weapons and combat sensors plus dedicated operations spaces. She can, however, be fitted with sensors and weapons (e.g., containerized point missile defence system) and with additional working spaces. It is understood she has points for heavy machine guns and strengthened decks for heavier systems. Fitment could take time which may affect the speed with which the ship could be deployed. However, it can be foreseen at this time that by far the majority of likely missions for her would not involve high-intensity combat so she is unlikely to need much outfitting.
5. ***Asterix*** is more survivable than her three immediate predecessors. She has a double bottom. Of course, any ship carrying significant amounts of ship fuel, aviation gas and munitions is very vulnerable.
6. Whilst ***Asterix*** has modern merchant ship damage control systems (firefighting and the like), she is not compartmented like a naval ship nor has she a chemical-biological-radiological-nuclear defence '*citadel*.' She also lacks a large crew, capable of undertaking significant damage control as is the company in a naval ship. These are major factors that differentiate her from a naval design replenishment oiler.
7. ***Asterix*** is an excellent interim replenishment oiler and, once the Protecteur-class replenishment oilers are built by the Joint Support Ship (JSS) project, would make a great second line oiler, especially for operations off North America.
8. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) needs the Protecteur-class replenishment oilers as they will be even more capable of operating in danger zones than Asterix, and ultimately the CAF needs to procure equipment and train people to fight in high intensity conflicts. For that, it is Canada's responsibility to have the best and be as ready as possible.
9. Major decisions of defence procurement are the purview of the Government of Canada. It is evident that the government sees the necessity of two replenishment oilers as a steady state for the RCN, but also assesses that until then one interim oiler will suffice. Ultimately the numbers and capabilities of the ships is the result of decision based on geo-strategic-economic cost-benefit risk analyses. **Source: Ottawa Citizen**

US Navy, JMSDF Participate in MultiSail 2018

Release Date: 3/6/2018 9:57:00 AM

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Sara B. Sexton, Commander, Task Force 70 Public Affairs

APRA HARBOR, Guam (NNS) -- Units and personnel from the U.S. Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) are scheduled to participate in the annual bilateral training exercise **MultiSail 2018**, Mar. 8-14. **MultiSail** is an annual bilateral training exercise that improves interoperability between U.S. and Japanese forces. In 2018 the focus of the exercise will be on improving fundamental skills such as tracking and defeating submarines, combatting other surface forces, live fire training, and interoperability with U.S. and JMSDF units. "***MultiSail i****s an opportunity for our ships to increase our combat proficiency at sea*," said Capt. Jon Duffy, commander, Destroyer Squadron 15. "*We have designed MultiSail to exercise how we detect, locate, track and engage simulated units at sea, in the air, on land, and underwater with our Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force allies to help us increase our interoperability in a range of mission areas*." Participants include U**SS *Antietam* (CG 54), USS *Curtis Wilbur* (DDG 54), USS *Benfold* (DDG 65), USS *Mustin* (DDG 89), JS *Fuyuzuki* (DD-118)**, and a number of subsurface and other special units. "***MultiSail 2018*** *provide us a valuable opportunity to increase JMSDF tactical capabilities and to strengthen our interoperability with our U.S. Navy allies*," said Cmdr. Kazuteru Hirano, JS Fuyuzuki's commanding officer. "*The Japan-U.S. alliance is stronger than it has ever been, and it is growing stronger*." The participating forces will exercise a wide range of capabilities and demonstrate the inherent flexibility of our combined forces. These capabilities range from maritime security operations to more complex anti-submarine and air defense exercises. The lessons learned from exercises like **MultiSail 2018** will assist the U.S. Navy and JMSDF to develop regional capabilities that provide a full range of options in defense of their interests and those of their allies and partners around the world. MultiSail uses realistic, shared training scenarios to enhance the ability of the U.S, Navy and JMSDF to work together to confront any contingency. **MultiSail** prepares forces that will provide the deterrence and stabilizing effects of a force-in-being, ready at the outset of a contingency without delays for buildups or extensive mission rehearsal. **Source: http://www.navy.mil**

Japan's navy appoints first woman to command warship squadron

TOKYO - Japan's navy on Tuesday appointed the first woman to command a warship squadron, including the flagship ***Izumo*** helicopter carrier, as it tries to lure more females to make up for a dearth of male recruits in greying Japan. Capt Ryoko Azuma, will command four ships with a combined crew of 1,000, of which only 30 are women, which make up the Maritime Self Defense Force's (MSDF) First Escort Division. "*I don't think about being a woman. I will concentrate my energy on fulfilling my duties as commander,*" Azuma, 44, said at a change of command ceremony attended by 400 sailors aboard the ***Izumo***, which was docked at a shipyard in Yokohama near Tokyo for repairs. When she joined the MSDF in 1996 women were barred from serving on warships, a rule that the navy abolished ten years ago. Submarines, however, are still crewed only by men. Japan's military, like the wider economy is turning to women to make up a shortfall in

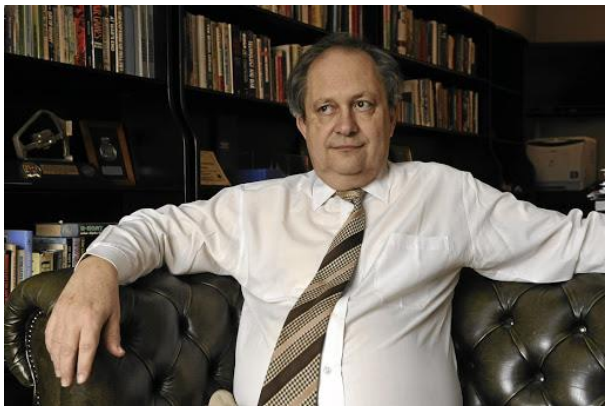
personnel as the nation's working age population shrinks amid a drop in birth-rates. The number of people aged between 18 and 26 years old is forecast by the government to shrink to seven million people by 2065 from 11 million last year.

Capt Ryoko Azuma who is the first female commander of a navy destroyer squadron in Japan aboard JMSDF's helicopter carrier **Izumo** on March 6, 2018. **Photo: Reuters/Nobuhiro Kubo**

Unlike commercial companies, however, Japan's military is unable to relocate units overseas or hire foreigners to supplement to their Japanese staff. By 2030, the SDF plans to increase the combined number of women serving in the air sea and ground forces to 9 percent of the total from 6 percent, or 14,000 people now. In addition to Azuma, other senior female officers in the MSDF include four captains and a rear admiral in charge of logistics. "*I want to devote myself to becoming a person that will inspire others*," Azuma said when asked if she wanted to serve as a role model for other women. **Source: Reuters World News**

Armscor pulls the plug on order for navy's offshore patrol vessels

01 March 2018 - 05:52 Neels Blom

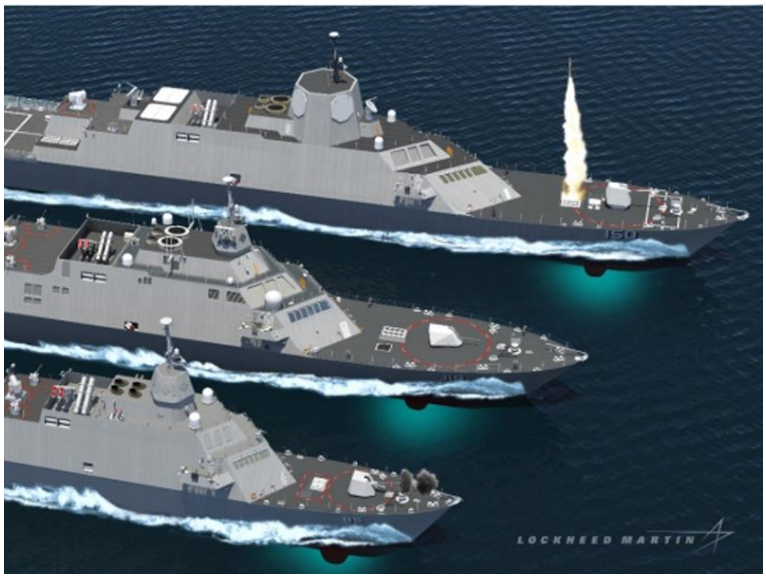


Too small: Defence analyst Helmoed Heitman says the ships being built by Damen Shipyards Cape Town are too small to patrol where they are needed most, such as in the Mozambique Channel. Picture: SUPPLIED

State-owned arms procurement agency Armscor has cancelled a long-awaited order for three offshore patrol vessels for the South African Navy. This comes after Damen Shipyards Cape Town, the South African affiliate of Dutch shipbuilder Damen, won the award for the construction of three inshore patrol vessels. Delivery was expected in about seven years' time. The order, along with the cancelled order, formed part of Project Biro. Armscor also confirmed that in November 2017 — under Project Hotel — it had awarded an order for the construction of a hydrographic survey vessel for the navy to Southern African Shipyards in Durban. Delivery is expected in four years' time. The orders under Project Hotel and Biro represent the first major acquisition for the navy since the arms deal of the 1990s. Neither the shipbuilder nor Armscor would disclose the value of the orders, though an industry insider quoted by Defenceweb speculated it could have been as high as R8bn if all the elements in the projects had been awarded. Other industry insiders say the cancellation of the order for the offshore patrol vessels was probably due to budgetary constraints. The defence allocation in the 2018 budget came to R47.9bn from R48.9bn in 2017. In real terms that is a decline of about 6%. The orders have been awarded as part of the government's **Operation Phakisa**, which has been conceived to stimulate the maritime industry. Armscor said on Wednesday about 250 direct and 2,000 indirect jobs would be created over five years in local subcontracts under Project Biro. The vessels would be deployed off the South African coast to protect the country's maritime resources. "*The project aims to develop SA's maritime security, ensuring that the country has the capability to respond effectively, rapidly and cost-efficiently to maritime threats such as illegal trafficking and fishing*," said Sam Montsi, the chairman of Damen Shipyards Cape Town. DA shadow defence minister Kobus Marais said his party supported the acquisitions. "*Defending SA's maritime interests with the equipment the navy has is like plugging holes in a dyke with your fingers*." Defence analyst Helmoed Heitman was critical of the acquisitions. "*The three ships being built by Damen are too small to be useful to patrol where they would be needed most, such as in the Mozambique Channel to protect oil tankers and around Marion Island to protect SA's valuable fish stocks. But for inshore service they are too big; the only true inshore zone is False Bay. "The larger survey vessel [under Project Hotel] is a strictly luxury acquisition, though it is being built to be adaptable for multiple purposes*." **Source:** https://www.businesslive.co.za

Multi-Mission Surface Combatant (MMSC)

Project Type:	Surface combat ship
Developer:	Lockheed Martin
Standard Length:	118.6m
Weight:	3,600t
Speed:	30kt
Range:	5,000nmi



Lockheed Martin MMSC (Multi-Mission Surface Combatant) is a derivative of the US Navy's Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ship (LCS). It was selected for the Royal Saudi Naval Forces' (RSNF) multi-mission surface combat ship requirement. The US State Department approved a possible $11.25bn foreign military sale (FMS) of four MMSCs and associated equipment to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in October 2015. A letter of offer and acceptance for the sale was signed by the US Navy and Saudi Arabia in May 2017. The MMSC platform can be configured with a variety of sensors and weapons based on operational requirements of the naval customer. It also allows for interoperability with the US Navy and allied naval forces in joint operations. The ship can counter a range of current and future maritime threats in both open sea and littoral zones. Its mission capabilities include anti-surface warfare (ASuW), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-air warfare (AAW), mine warfare, electronic warfare, and special operations.

Design and features of MMSC

The surface combat ship features an open-architecture design with a semi-planing mono-hull made of steel and an aluminium superstructure. It can be built in different sizes with a length ranging between 118.6m-150m to provide mission flexibility. It will have a beam of 17.6m, draught of 4.3m, and maximum displacement of approximately 3,600t. The large flight deck at the rear is intended to support take-off and landing operations of an MH-60R Seahawk multi-mission maritime helicopter. It will also feature a large hangar to accommodate a helicopter and two vertical take-off and landing unmanned air vehicles (VTUAVs). Rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs) will be carried amidships to support naval missions in high sea state conditions. The articulating stern ramp is designed to permit fast and safe deployment of boats.

MMSC armament details

In ASuW configuration, the ship can be armed with two Harpoon shipboard launchers with eight RGM-84 Harpoon Block II anti-ship missiles, one MK-15 Mod 31 SeaRAM close-in weapon system (CIWS) with 11-cell RIM 116C Block II Rolling Airframe Missiles (RAMs), a 57mm Mk110 deck gun, and a medium-calibre rapid fire gun.The ASW missions will be supported by an MH-60 helicopter and AN / SLQ-25 torpedo defence system. For AAW tasks, the ship can be outfitted with eight-cell Mk-41 vertical launch system with 32 RIM-162 Evolved Sea Sparrow missiles (ESSM), long-range standard missiles, medium-calibre rapid-fire main gun, and CIWS. A remote multi-mission vehicle (RMMV) will be used to execute mine warfare missions. The ship can be armed with 20mm remote guns on port and starboard sides, in standard configuration.

COMBATSS-21 combat system on the MMSC

The MMSC will feature Lockheed Martin COMBATSS-21 combat management system (CMS), which is designed to integrate the ship's sensors, communications and armament to provide improved mission flexibility and self-defence. "*It will have the ability to operate in high sea state conditions and reach a maximum speed of 30kt, as well as a range of 5,000nmi*." The system will incorporate display interface, weapon management system, track management system, situational awareness, and identification systems.

Sensors

The sensors on-board the MMSC will include a TRS-4D surveillance and target acquisition radar, a modern fire control radar, a multi-function phased array radar, an identification friend or foe (IFF) system, towed, hull-mounted and dipping sonars, as well as a compact low-frequency active and passive variable depth sonar.

Propulsion and performance of MMSC

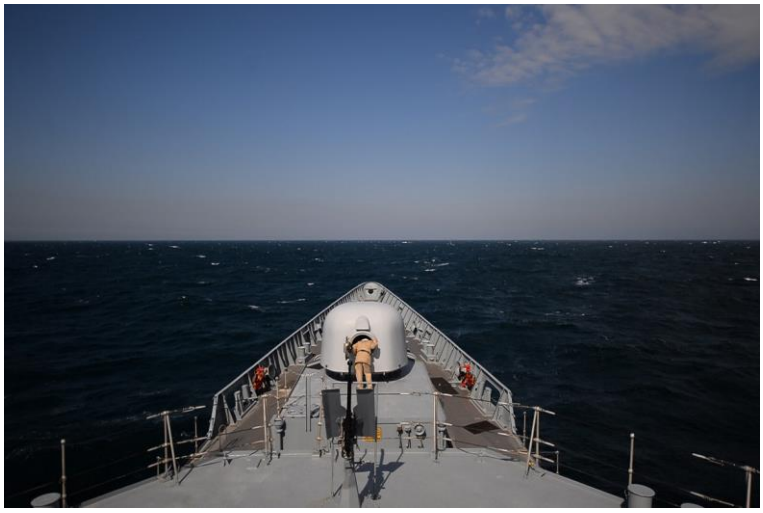
The multi-mission surface combat ship will be powered by a combined diesel and gas (CODAG) propulsion system. It will have the ability to operate in high sea state conditions and reach a maximum speed of 30kt, as well as a range of 5,000nmi.

Contractors involved

Lockheed Martin is the prime contractor for Saudi Arabia's MMSC programme. Naval architecture and marine engineering firm Gibbs and Cox will provide design support for four MMSC ships, under a subcontract awarded by Lockheed Martin in January 2018. **Source: http://www.naval-technology.com**

Romania launches corvette procurement, eyes offset to modernize frigates

By: Jaroslaw Adamowski March 5



A seaman inspects a cannon on the Romanian frigate ***Regina Maria*** during a military drill on the Black Sea on March 16, 2015. (Daniel Mihailescu/AFP via Getty Images)

WARSAW, Poland — Romania's Ministry of Defence has kick-started the much-awaited procedure to buy four new corvettes for its Navy to boost its presence in the Black Sea. Under the plan, the first vessel will be built within a maximum period of three years. The entire procurement is to be completed within seven years, according to released documentation. The procurement is divided into three stages: qualification, dialog and evaluation of the submitted offers. "*The qualification stage will take place over a period of 56 calendar days following the publication date of the call for participation*," according to the documentation, which is dated Feb. 26, 2018. The vessel is to be enabled with a displacement of at least 1,600 tons. The acquisition is estimated to be worth €1.6 billion (U.S. $2 billion). Romanian Defence Minister Mihai Fifor said the planned offset agreement is to be used to modernize two Type 22 Broadsword-class frigates operated by the country's Navy. "*We want to return to the domestic defense industry as much of the 2 percent [of the gross domestic product spent annually on the military] as possible*," Fifor told local news agency Agerpres. A bill to acquire the corvettes was approved in February by the country's parliament. The legislation states that the selected contractor must own a shipyard in Romania, which is located "*on the Black Sea and/or on the Danube river*" shore, and it must be operated by an entity based in an European Union or NATO member state. This means that the only admissible participant of the procurement is Dutch shipbuilder Damen Shipyards Group, which owns a facility in Galati, in eastern Romania. **Source: https://www.defensenews.com**

China's hypersonic weapons could sink US aircraft carriers, Pentagon official says

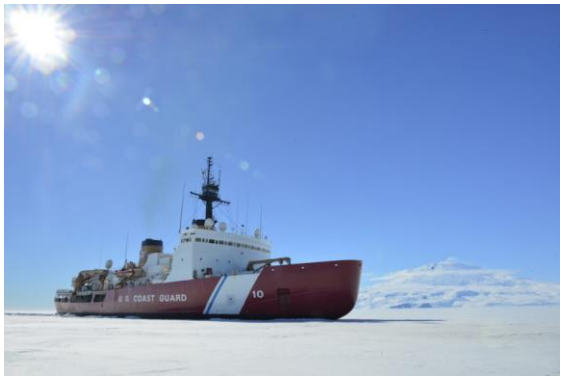
by Jamie McIntyre
March 06, 2018 12:59 PM

The era of the American aircraft carrier as the premier embodiment of military might could be ending unless the U.S. develops defenses for the next generation of highly maneuverable, super-fast hypersonic weapons under development by Russia and China, the Pentagon's top weapons researcher said Tuesday. Michael Griffin, undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, said China is spending billions to develop a non-nuclear version of the weapons that could render U.S. aircraft carriers vulnerable to attack. "*In round numbers, China has done 20 times as many of hypersonic weapons tests as has the United States over the last decade*," Griffin told the annual McAleese-Credit Suisse Defense Conference. China in particular, he said, has set itself on a course to become a global power and America's primary adversary. "*When the Chinese can deploy tactical or regional hypersonic systems, they hold at risk our carrier battle groups. They hold our entire surface fleet at risk. They hold at risk our forward-deployed land-based forces*," Griffin said. Griffin, who has been on the job less than two weeks, said developing defenses for the hypersonic threat is his No. 1 technical priority for the Pentagon. "*Without our ability to defend and without at least an equal response capability on the offensive side, then what we've done is we have allowed a situation to exist where our deployed forces are held at risk. We cannot do the same for them*," Griffin said. "*And so our only response is either to let them have their way, or to go nuclear. Well, that should be an unacceptable situation for the United States*." Hypersonic glide vehicles are unmanned aircraft that travel at more than five times the speed of sound, more than a mile per second, below U.S. missile defenses. They can carry conventional or nuclear weapons and reach anywhere in the world in three hours or less. "*The advantage of hypersonic systems is broadly speaking, irrespective of their range, that they underfly missile defense and they overfly air defense. That's a niche we haven't spent much time in recently, and if I had to pick my highest technical priority responding that that, both offensively and defensively, that would be my highest technical priority*," Griffin said. "*If our response is either let them win or go nuclear, that's a bad place to be. It invites bad behavior on the part of adversaries,*" he said.

Source: https://www.washingtonexaminer.com

U.S. Navy Releases Proposal Request for Coast Guard's New Heavy Polar Icebreaker

March 6, 2018 by gCaptain

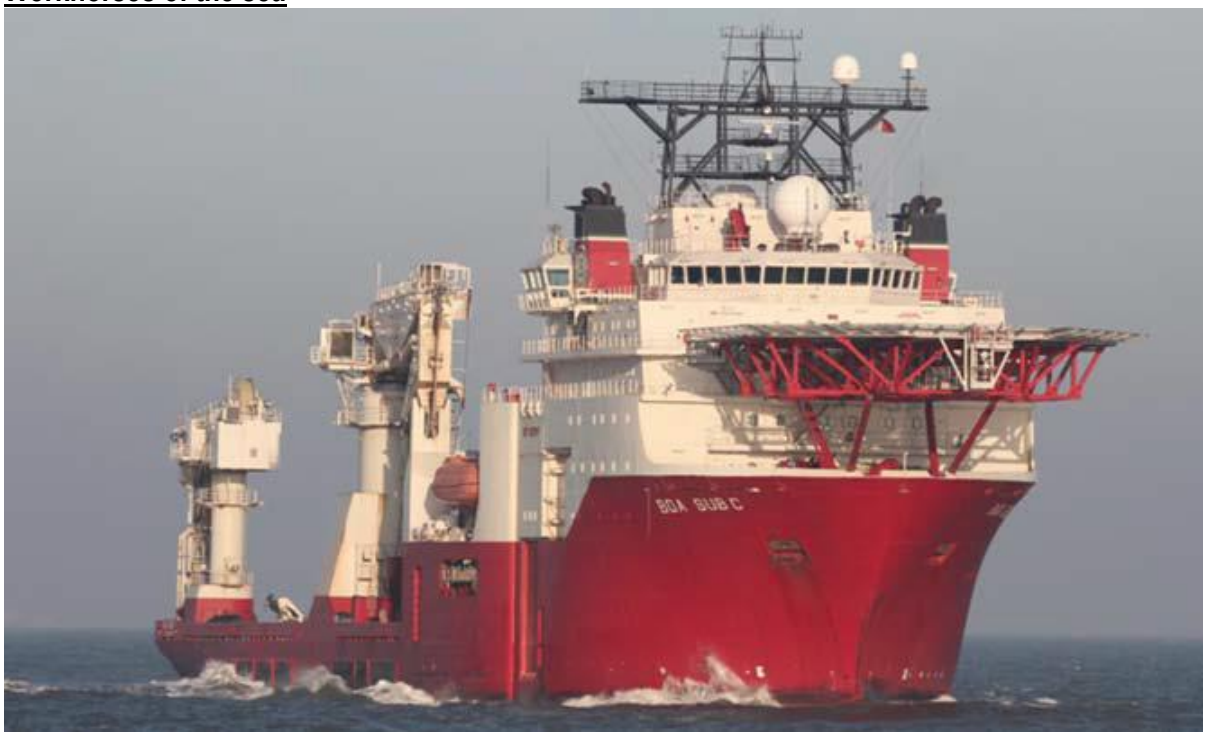


The Coast Guard Cutter ***Polar Star*** breaks ice in McMurdo Sound near Antarctica on Saturday, Jan. 13, 2018. U.S. Coast Guard Photo

The U.S. Navy, in collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard, has released a request for proposal for the advance procurement and detail design work for the USCG's first new heavy polar icebreaker in more than 40 years. The RFP, which was issued March 2, also includes options for the detail design and construction (DD&C) of up two three heavy polar icebreakers. A single contract resulting from the RFP is expected to be awarded in 2019. Delivery of the icebreaker is not expected until 2023, based on current estimates. "*Today's action marks a major milestone in the collective efforts by the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Navy to deliver a new fleet of Polar Icebreakers*," said Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Paul Zukunft. "*These multi-mission vessels are key components of our national strategy to advance U.S. interests and to keep pace with the growing volume of commercial activities in the Polar Regions. New heavy Polar Icebreakers are the most effective and efficient way of meeting our current and anticipated mission demands in these critical regions, and I'm ecstatic that we are moving smartly to deliver these national assets to the U.S. Coast Guard fleet."* The 399-foot **USCGC *Polar Star***, built more than 40 years ago, is currently the only operational heavy icebreaker in the U.S. fleet. With a crew of nearly 150 people, it weighs 13,500 tons and uses 75,000 horsepower to break ice up to 21 feet thick. Earlier this year, the icebreaker experienced both flooding and engine failure during its annual icebreaking mission to Antarctica, but luckily both issues were able to be resolved by the vessel's crew and without the need of additional assistance. The Coast Guard also has the 420-foot medium icebreaker **USCGC *Healy***, which commissioned in 2000. A second heavy icebreaker, **USCGC *Polar Sea***, was placed in commissioned, inactive status by the Coast Guard in 2011 and the service is evaluating options to reactivate the ship. The Coast Guard expects the ***Polar Star*** to remain in service through approximately 2020 to 2023.

Source: http://gcaptain.com

Workhorses of the sea



The ***Boa Sub C*** inbound between the IJmuiden breakwaters **Photo : Jan Plug (c)**