



AMBITIOUS *MARINHA*

Brazil's immense offshore resources often obscure its role as a major port cluster of the South Atlantic. Considering that 93% of its foreign trade happens by sea, it is easy to understand that the renewal of its naval forces is a key element of the South American giant's maritime strategy today.

MARITIME ASPIRATIONS OF BRAZIL

The "Blue Amazon" plan was launched in 2004 to develop the economic and strategic potential of 7,300 km of coastline and an EEZ rich in hydrocarbons and fisheries resources. The plan is a priority for the Ministry of Defence. The maritime interests of the country are increasing, both from its openness to international trade and its oil production as the 13th largest producer in the world with its offshore fields. In a clear sign of its new ambition, the government filed an international request for extension of the continental shelf covering nearly 700 000 km². This would place under its jurisdiction all maritime space located between the mainland and the islands of Trindade and Martin Vaz. The maritime domain of the country would then extend over more than 4 million km². Far from being limited to the Atlantic area, Brasilia is also interested in the Caribbean, by investing in the port of Mariel (Cuba) there are plans to become the maritime hub of the Caribbean area.

Therefore, there is no wonder that the country is investing in *Marinha do Brasil*, although currently short of its ambitions.

A NAVAL STRATEGY

The extensive rejuvenation plan of the Brazilian Navy is built around several components with various degrees of advancement, financing and priority. Prosub, the renewal program of the Brazilian submarine force, materialized in 2009 with an order for four units of the *Scorpena* class to be delivered between 2018 and 2022 and a nuclear attack submarine in 2025. It also includes an important technology transfer of French DCNS involved in the construction of a submarine construction site and a naval base, whose main hall was inaugurated in December 2014.

Meanwhile, the Prosuper program is the rejuvenation of the surface fleet with the acquisition of a French TCD (transport landing craft) and a new conventional aircraft carrier to replace the *São Paulo* (ex-*Foch*). Another aspect of the program is the commissioning of eleven new ships, including five new generation frigates and several *Amazonas* type patrol boats. France takes an active part in these projects with DCNS Group contributing to submarines and CMN yards to patrol boats.

These programs, with their associated weapons and required logistical support, represent a considerable economic and technological challenge.

Moreover, ongoing construction activity in connection with the acquisition of new submarines enriches the industrial and technological local base of defense (DTIB), and supports job creation in the country.

In the medium to long term, within ten to twenty years, the modernization of the Brazilian fleet would enable the country to consolidate its status as a major regional power and to assert itself on the international maritime scene. The implementation of a blue-water navy and a coherent battle group represent a real strategic asset for Brazil.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME

The question of feasibility arises naturally given the scope of the naval program. While the construction of conventional submarines is well advanced and some surface vessels, such as patrol boats, are being acquired, the financing of other projects is less clear. It's worth mentioning the extension of the operational missions of the aircraft carrier *São Paulo* until at least 2035 - she will then have been in operation for 75 years - or the commissioning of a new air group to replace the *Skyhawk*. The *Gripen* fighter could be considered, but navalization of an aircraft remains a complex, expensive and risky enterprise.

While Brazil should achieve its goal of ensuring sovereignty in its EEZ, a transition to global maritime power status is less clear. Its prestige and power of influence beyond Latin America have yet to assert themselves. The integration to the UN Security Council as a permanent member – a true ambition of the country - is the prize.



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