

SHIPS FOR MULTI-MISSIONS OVERSEAS

While addressing a French symposium of sea specialists last December 4, Jean-Marc Herault, the prime minister, stressed the importance of sea for France in the future. As he mentioned it, the B2M multitasks ships bring to France a significant trump card.

SAFEGUARDING FRENCH INTERESTS

In order to safeguard its rights over its 11 million square kilometers EEZ ("economic exclusive area"), France is going to commission 3 B2M due to replace BATRAL light transport ships and P400 patrol ships. B2M will help fight the rise in unlawful fishing, exploitation of natural resources or other trafficking. She will link the French overseas communities to the mainland and ensure national presence in remote areas. She will also help supporting remote local communities as well as humanitarian projects. Built to civilian standards, she has adequate equipment to be used as a supply ship.

The first B2M should be delivered in December 2015 and commissioned in February 2016. The other two will follow in August and September 2016; their home ports will be Noumea in New-Caledonia, Papeete in French Polynesia, and Fort-de-France in the West Indies.

The main contractor is the Piriou shipyard; DCNS is in charge of the maintenance with the assignment to keep the ships in operational condition for 6 years from delivery. Contrary to some initial suggestion, the €100 million contract, signed Dec 30 2013, is totally financed by the defense ministry in spite of the general purpose of this program.



MISSION CRITICAL SPECIFICATIONS

B2M has a large cruising radius, not as large as patrol boats have, but sufficient to replace them in a number of missions.

This ship will be fitted to navigate over 250 days in a row. She will have a double crew of 20 members. With additional tanks, she can navigate 9000 nautical miles without refueling and fulfil longer missions in high seas. She doesn't retain all the other amphibious performances of the BATRAL or P400, but compensates with enhanced capabilities at anchor. B2M will carry a 12 ton crane, able to quickly load and unload six 20ft containers and a heavy equipment for civil works.

While B2M is not to be a battleship, she will carry two 12.7 mm machine guns and two water cannons. She can also quickly deploy 2 high speed motor boats of the type "EDO NG". B2M can also be used as a base for commandos with an ability to operate the new generation commando high-speed boat "ECUME NG". Future improvements could allow for the deployment of drones to increase the radius of the surveillance missions.

Though a transition program to the "BATSIMAR" project, ("batiment de surveillance et d'intervention maritime"), B2M is likely to remain in service longer as she is designed for a lifespan of 25 years.

Main characteristics of B2M :

- Length / Breadth 65 m / 14 m
- Displacement : 1500 tons (2300 tons with full load)
- Crew : 20 (+20 passengers possible)
- Range : 5000 nautical miles at 12 knot speed
- Maximum speed : 13 knots
- Carrying a 12 ton crane
- Loading capacity : 6 20ft containers