

Navy Plans to Build An Upgraded Version of Corvette: Source

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Taiwanese navy Tuo Chiang-class stealth corvettes are to be upgraded, notably with a new air-defense missile capability based on the Tien Chien II missile system. (Twitter photo)

A military source on Friday confirmed plans for the production of an upgraded version of the navy's Tuo Chiang-class stealth corvette that is to incorporate expanded anti-aircraft capabilities.

The new vessel type is to be longer, wider and equipped with 3D radar systems and a ship-to-air version of the Tien Chien II ("Sky Sword") guided missile system.

A total of 11 vessels are to be produced in three lots, for a total of 12 ships including the original Tuo Chiang-class corvette, the source said.

The navy plans to begin operating three of the new vessels and make design adjustments where needed before commissioning the subsequent two lots, the source said, adding that the first lot is scheduled to be completed by 2025 at a cost of NT\$14.434 billion (US\$471.68 million).

Navy contractors are to submit final designs by the end of this month, when final bidding for the contract is also to take place, the source said.

The displacement of the upgraded vessels is to increase by about 100 tonnes from the current model's 567 tonnes. They are also being designed to reach a maximum speed of more than 30 knots (55.56kph), the source said.

The class' length is to be increased from 60.4m to 65m, while width is to increase from 14m to 15m and draft is to increase from 2.3m to 3m, the source said.

The size increases would result in ships of the upgraded class being able to carry more personnel, from the original vessel's 41 crew to 53, with sleeping quarters to be adjusted to accommodate the additional personnel, the source said.

The decision to upgrade the Tuo Chiang-class corvette was based primarily on a need to improve its anti-aircraft capabilities, the source said, adding that the Tien Chien II missile and 3D radar systems would complement the current model's Hsiung Feng II and Hsiung Feng III ("Brave Wind") anti-ship missiles.

"The Hsiung Feng and Tien Chien missile systems can be combined in whatever configuration the mission calls for," the source added.

The biggest visible change would be to the radar mast, which is to be larger on the upgraded vessels due to the 3D radar system, the source said.

The bridge on the new vessels would be larger than the original's, with a closed tower-style mast containing the radar system fitted above, the source added.