



China: Type 075 Amphibious Assault Ship Launched

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying article from China's *Xinhua* state news agency, in late September, China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation launched the first of a new class of amphibious assault ship, the Type 075. The new class is equipped with a flat deck meant for helicopter operations as opposed to an angled deck, catapults or "ski jump" ramps used for launching and recovering aircraft. Images show what appears to be a large "well deck" that can be flooded to allow at least two landing craft air cushion (LCACs) or a larger complement of amphibious armored vehicles to exit. The Type 075 will join China's existing Type 071 and Type 072 amphibious assault and amphibious landing ships as a key part of executing "three-dimensional landing operations" [立体登陆作战].

The Type 075 complements observable trends in China's expansion of its amphibious forces. In November 2018, Chinese state television interviewed the commander of a PLA Navy Marine aviation brigade, which appears to be a new unit. With current plans for an eventual expansion to seven PLA Marine Brigades, additional units are likely in the future and would be responsible for transporting and providing close air support to landing marines. China's two dedicated attack helicopters—the Z-10 and Z-19—can be expected to be aboard the new amphibious assault ship. The Type 075 can also be expected to carry Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and Anti-submarine Warfare (ASW) variants of the Z-18.

New medium helicopters are being fielded by the PLA. China's new Z-20 helicopter—a reverse-engineered S-70C Blackhawk—made its first official appearance during the military parade commemorating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China held on October 1st. Photos have also recently emerged of a naval variant called the Z-20F. The new helicopter features a five rotor design and what appears to be a belly-mounted radar and chin-mounted optical search system. A mockup was previously seen aboard China's Type 055 guided-missile cruiser. These helicopters might eventually help fill a role as more capable transports, armed combatants or specialized helicopters that the lighter Z-9s.

Chinese media has previously suggested that the Type 075 could carry a complement of ten Z-10s and twenty Z-18 heavy transport helicopters. As can be seen in the accompanying chart, this represents a significant increase in air transport capacity compared to the existing Type 071 ships. Chinese media have speculated that if used as part of a formation [编队] with two Type 071 amphibious transport docks, the entire amphibious assault operational formation would have 28 transport helicopters (including four aboard each of the Type 071s) and roughly 10 armed helicopters to send into battle. While there has been very little reporting from official media outlets or the shipyard building it, the new ship clearly fills an important gap in China's maritime power projection capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The ship is the first amphibious attack ship independently developed by China, with strong amphibious combat capabilities and capable of carrying out a diverse range of missions.”

Source: “我国两栖攻击舰首舰下水 (China's First Amphibious Assault Ship Launched),” *Xinhua*, 25 September 2019. www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-09/25/c_1125037364.htm

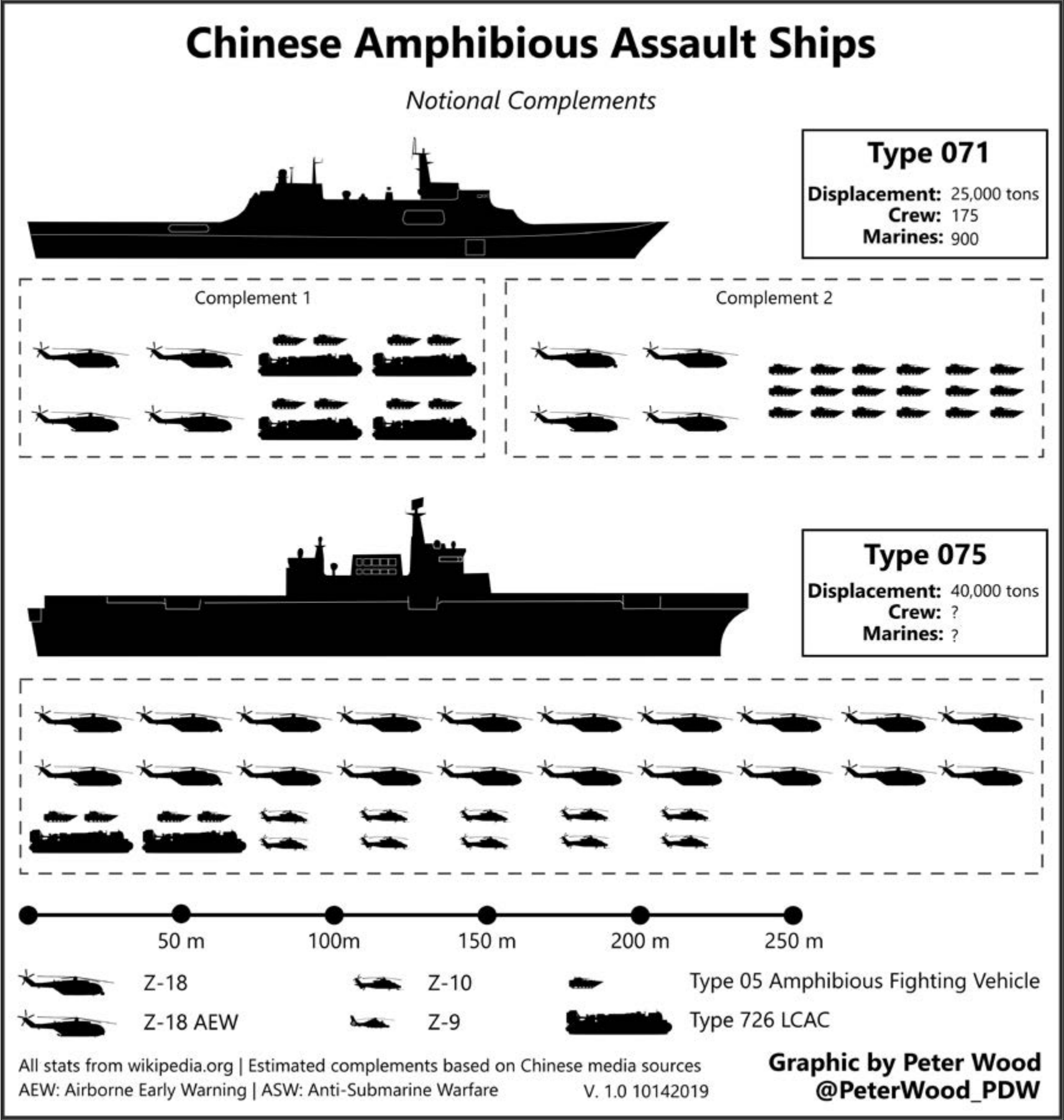
On the morning of September 25, the Chinese navy's first amphibious assault ship was launched in Shanghai. At about 9:20 a.m., the ceremony began with the solemn national anthem, and military leaders jointly cut ribbons for the inaugural amphibious assault ship. After the ribbon-cutting, a champagne bottle was smashed against the port side, the ship's whistle sounded and ribbons and colored balls flew into the air spraying the flight deck. At the same time, to the sound of applause, the drydock doors were opened and water poured into the dock.

The ship is the first amphibious attack ship developed independently in China, with strong amphibious combat capabilities and capable of carrying out a diverse range of missions. The ship will now carry out a series of moored navigation tests and other work.

Leaders from relevant ministries including the State Council, the Central Military Commission's Equipment Development Department, the Navy and Shanghai Municipality, China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation, attended the ceremony, as well as scientific research and construction personnel.



Continued: China: Type 075 Amphibious Assault Ship



Chinese Amphibious Assault Ships.
Image by Peter Wood