



Sea Trials for China’s Second Aircraft Carrier Point to Accelerating Growth in Capability

OE Watch Commentary: The rate of China’s accelerating progress in its aircraft carrier program is an indication of the country’s commitment to rapidly building a stronger, more capable navy. As described in the two accompanying excerpted articles, published in *New Delhi’s Television (NDTV)* and the *South China Morning Post* respectively, China’s first indigenously built aircraft carrier, known as the Type 001A, was preparing for its second sea trial in early July. The first sea trial took place from 13-18 May.



The Type 001A aircraft carrier after launch at Dalian (2017).

Source: GG001213, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E5%81%9C%E6%B3%8A%E4%BA%8E%E5%A4%A7%E8%BF%9E%E6%B8%AF%E7%9A%84001A.jpg>, CC0.

The Type 001A is China’s second aircraft carrier. The first carrier, the Liaoning, was a refitted Soviet-era Admiral Kuznetsov-class vessel. While the Liaoning is an older platform, analysts view it as an ideal platform from which to learn. Song Zhongping, a military expert and TV commentator who was cited in both articles, explained that the Liaoning had taken nearly six years to become fully combat-ready after it entered service in 2012. Having gained experience in testing a large warship, Song expects the process to be accelerated for the Type 001A, with the ship expected to become operational and delivered to the People’s Liberation Army Navy within the next two years. First, however, it must successfully undergoes tests in different waters and under different ocean conditions.

Developing and constructing the Type 001A reportedly took 532 Chinese enterprises, including private firms, to complete and some 3,000 workers from across China worked on it daily. The vessel is said to contain more than 12,000 pieces of equipment and more than 3,600 cabins. The propulsion system design, copied from the Liaoning’s Soviet TB-12 engines, uses eight steam turbines.

The PLA has long lacked air supremacy in the South China Sea and on the high seas. Chinese observers are hopeful that the country’s aircraft carrier program could help it to overcome these shortcomings. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“It took nearly six years for the Liaoning to become fully combat-ready after it entered service in 2012. But...the experience gained (will) allow the new vessel to become combat-ready within about two years.”

Source: “China’s First Home Built Aircraft Carrier to Embark on Second Sea Trial,” *NDTV*, 6 July 2018. <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/chinas-first-home-built-aircraft-carrier-set-to-embark-on-second-sea-trial-1878997>

The carrier’s first sea trial was from May 13 to 18, and the success of the first trial proves that the process could be accelerated, a military expert said.

“The carrier can be delivered to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy as soon as possible,” Song [Zhongping, a military expert and TV commentator] told state-run Global Times.

China already has one aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, in service, ...”The Liaoning helps China gain experience in testing a huge warship like an aircraft carrier, so it can accelerate the progress for the next one, but progress has to be made step by step.”

The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) used to lack air supremacy in the South China Sea and on the high seas, Song said, adding that the aircraft carrier could help overcome that shortcoming.

Boasting more than 12,000 pieces of equipment, the carrier has been made by 532 Chinese enterprises including many private firms.

The vessel has more than 3,600 cabins. About 3,000 workers from across China worked on the ship on a daily basis.

Source: Catherine Wong and Minnie Chan, “China’s First Home-Grown Type 001A Aircraft Carrier Begins Maiden Sea Trial,” *South China Morning Post*, 23 April 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2142989/chinas-first-home-grown-aircraft-carrier-begins-maiden>

The sea trial of the Type 001A carrier, which coincides with the PLA Navy’s 69th anniversary, is expected to be limited in scope and duration but analysts said it had a symbolic importance as China sought to highlight the advances it had made as a nautical power.

The Type 001A’s propulsion system uses eight steam turbines – a design copied from the Soviet TB-12 engines used by its sister ship, the Liaoning.

Zhou said the new carrier would be tested for between six and 12 months in different waters and different ocean conditions before it was handed over to the navy.

One expert predicted the vessel could be combat-ready within two years.

It took nearly six years for the Liaoning to become fully combat-ready after it entered service in 2012. But Song said that the experience gained would allow the new vessel to become combat-ready within about two years.