



The Modernization of Malaysia's Armed Forces is Underway

OE Watch Commentary: Malaysia's military has recently been undergoing a push to modernize its equipment. The accompanying articles, both published in *China Press*, offer some of the details of the country's modernization efforts. Both articles indicate that the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) is planning to undergo a massive transformation program, consolidating and replacing its aging 15 classes of ships into five upgraded ones. Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) and a second batch of New-Generation Patrol Vessels (NGPV) will form the core of Malaysia's naval fleets in the future. They will be supplemented by submarines, Multi-Role Support Ships (MRSS), and Littoral Mission Ships (LMS). The RMN also plans to purchase new aircraft-based helicopters for the navy's air wing to support the combat missions of the force's surface vessels.

In phase one of the RMN's transformation program, which is expected to take place from 2021 through 2030, it plans to build another 14 LMSs and six patrol ships and acquire two new MRSSs. These new MRSSs will replace an aging fleet of Multi-Purpose Common Support Ships (MPCSS) and will be equipped to carry out humanitarian aid missions.

DRB-HICOM Defence Technologies Pte Ltd (DefTech) is a Malaysian company that manufactures military and commercial vehicles, equipment, and spare parts for domestic use and export. Among other things, one article reports how DefTech is expected to work with Turkish Aerospace Industries Incorporation (TAI) to promote ANKA reconnaissance and surveillance unmanned aerial vehicles and the T-129 attack helicopter to the Malaysian Air Force.

The article also mentions that Malaysia reportedly struck a deal to import 18 units of a new variant of the French-produced LG1 105mm howitzer during the recent Defense Services Asia Exhibition. The LG1 105mm howitzer has a firing range of 10.5 miles and is ideal for use by rapid deployment units. It can be towed by a military vehicle or transported by air. The first six LG1 howitzers are scheduled to be delivered in 2019 and the last in February 2020. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“The (military) transformation program has gotten the government's approval. It is now going on a solid track, and the government has thrown positive support behind the program.”

Source: Qiu Ren Jie, “司令：提升航空兵戰力 擬購直升機支援海軍 (Navy Chief: Boosting Combat Capabilities of Navy's Air Wing; Plans to Buy Helicopters to Support Navy),” *China Press*, 26 April 2018. <http://www.chinapress.com.my/20180426/%E5%8F%B8%E4%BB%A4%E5%85%B5%E6%88%B0%E5%8A%9B-%E6%93%AC%E8%B3%BC%E7%9B%B4%E5%8D%87%E6%A9%9F%E6%94%AF%E6%8F%B4%E6%B5%B7%E8%BB%8D/>

In addition to implementing the navy's transformation program, the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) also plans to boost the combat capabilities of its air wing. RMN plans to buy new aircraft-based helicopters for the navy's air wing to support combat missions of the force's surface vessels.

RMN Chief Admiral Ahmad Kamarulzaman Ahmad Badaruddin stated that the navy has made their plan to enhance the combat capabilities of the navy's air wing so that the navy can handle routine and non-routine tasks in a more efficient manner.

He pointed out that the effects of the RMN Transformation program that has been implemented since 2015 have been seen. The transformation program has gotten the government's approval. It is now going on a solid track, and the government has thrown positive support behind the program

He said that RMN plans to acquire two new multi role support ships (MRSS) under the first phase of the transformation program (2021 - 2030). At the same time, RMN will also build another 14 LMSs and 6 patrol ships. According to him, the LCSs and LMSs under construction are being built as scheduled. RMN will start to receive these new military vessels from 2020 to 2023.

Source: Qiu Ren Jie, “DEFTECH生產具出口能力 裝甲車沙地測試|中國報 (DefTech's Products Have Export Potential, Armored Car Tested in Saudi Arabia),” *China Press*, 21 April 2018. <http://www.chinapress.com.my/20180421/deftech%E7%94%9F%E7%94%A2%E5%85%B7%E5%87%B4%E5%8F%A3%E8%83%BD%E5%8A%9B-%E8%A3%9D%E7%94%B2%E8%BB%8A%E6%B2%99%E5%9C%B0%E6%B8%AC%E8%A9%A6/>

TNI [Indonesian Defense Forces] Chief Air Marshall Hadi Tjahjanto will deploy around two thousand troops from Java to the Natuna area, Riau Islands Province. The deployment is meant to fill positions in the facilities that have been built there.

“The deployment of personnel and combat troops is part of the command and control transfer,” the TNI Chief said after visiting Sekatung Island and a number of military facilities that are under construction in Natuna Islands, Monday (23 Apr).

“The troops range from those of Army field artillery batteries, radar units to the Marine Corps,” Tjahjanto said.

At the same occasion, DPR [People's Representatives Council] Speaker Bambang Soesatyo reaffirmed that the construction of a military and defense base in the Natuna area, Riau Islands, must be reinforced to safeguards the integrity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia (NKR) from foreign intervention.

According to Soesatyo, the Natuna area, which is near the South China Sea (SCS), had been targeted by the United States and China, which want to control the SCS, so reinforcement to the national defense was needed in the Natuna area.