



# OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS PROCUREMENT IN NORTH AFRICA



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The respective countries of North Africa face a maritime threat landscape that is increasing in both severity and diversity. Its coast guards and naval forces currently face a more challenging role than ever before as they maintain the sanctity and safety of their national ports and coastlines. In order to carry out their duties effectively, these maritime forces need to be trained and equipped to the requisite standard that will allow them to overcome the myriad threats that they are likely to encounter.

Their governments understand the need to procure advanced Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) that will provide their servicemen with the means to carry out their assigned roles. As such, greater levels of OPV purchasing deals are being signed by North African governments with shipbuilding companies across the world in order to fulfil the following objectives:

**Countering asymmetrical approach to maritime terrorism:**

Well-armed, strategically capable terrorists and insurgents are operating with greater daring and confidence along the shores of Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Algeria.

**Interdiction of vessels involved in smuggling and illegal substance trafficking:**

Illicit goods and substances are crossing between North Africa and Southern Europe through the porous coastal borders. Interdiction efforts require advanced OPVs with sophisticated sensory equipment.

**Replacing/upgrading ageing vessels:**

Many North African naval fleets are made up of ageing vessels that are nearing obsolescence.

**Lethality and combat effectiveness:**

The latest OPVs offer comprehensive versatility through the use of advanced targeting systems, naval weapons and defensive countermeasures.

Improving overall surveillance and vigilant presence across coasts: Providing a constant defence against myriad threats and illegal activities including terrorism, piracy, smuggling, polluting and illegal fishing.

## Recent OPV Procurement Deals by Country

### Egypt

Egypt has one of the largest navies in the Middle East but with 2000km of coastline to protect and an ageing surface fleet that needs to carry out a more complicated and difficult role than ever before, the Egyptian Government has decided to secure a series of significant deals to update and/or replace OPVs in both the Navy and Coast Guard.<sup>1</sup>

One facet of this revised role is the rising severity of the threat posed by Daesh militants in the Sinai region. Most recently, in July 2015 an Egyptian naval vessel was set on fire after being targeted by rocket attacks from the militants, although no fatalities were reported.<sup>2</sup>

Another consideration is the crucial strategic and economic importance of the Suez Canal. Although the canal is currently undergoing a vast

<sup>1</sup> IHS Aerospace, Defence and Security, *Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces: Egyptian Navy, 2014*

<sup>2</sup> Gulf News, *Daesh claims responsibility for Egypt naval attack, 16/07/2015*

development project to widen it in order to accommodate a greater number of vessels much more rapidly, it remains a relatively narrow choke point. This vulnerability, coupled with its ever-increasing importance to Egypt's economic welfare, make it a prime target for terrorist actions.

**Recent OPV Purchases  
2009-2014: \$1.3 billion – Four  
Fast Missile Craft (FMC):**

Designed by VT Halter Marine in collaboration with Lockheed Martin, these advanced FMC were purchased in order to replace some of the Egyptian Navy's ageing attack craft. Capable of mounting surface-to-surface missile systems, guided missile launching systems (GMLS) close-in weapon systems (CIWS) and deck mounted 7.62mm M60 machine guns, these versatile attack vessels are designed to support larger OPVs and run vessel interdiction actions.

**2014: Approx \$200 million – FREMM Frigate:** Purchased from DCNS and built in Brest, France, the FREMM frigate designated Tahya Misr arrived in Alexandria in early August 2015, adding to the Egyptian Navy's OPV strength with its multi-purpose capabilities.

With its Herakles multifunction radar, Aster surface-to-air missiles, MdCN cruise missiles, Exocet MM40 anti-ship missiles, MU90 torpedoes and an Otobreda 76 mm gun, a FREMM frigate is capable of conducting anti-air, anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare.<sup>3</sup>

**2014-2017: \$1.35 billion – Four  
Gowind Corvettes at \$1.3 billion:**

Also purchased from DCNS, these four Gowind corvettes have the firepower and speed (max speed 25 knots) to aid smaller coast guard craft in interdiction operations against drug trafficking/smuggling vessels as well as effectively contributing in conventional naval warfare.<sup>4</sup>

These vessels are armed with an Oto Melara 76/62 Super Rapid Multi Feeding gun, two Reutech 20 mm Super Rogue turrets, eight MBDA MM 40 Block 3 Exocet anti-ship missiles, 16 MBDA VL MICA missiles and four DCNS MU90 torpedoes. They also have helicopter support features, further aiding their versatility and usefulness as multi-purpose craft.<sup>5</sup>

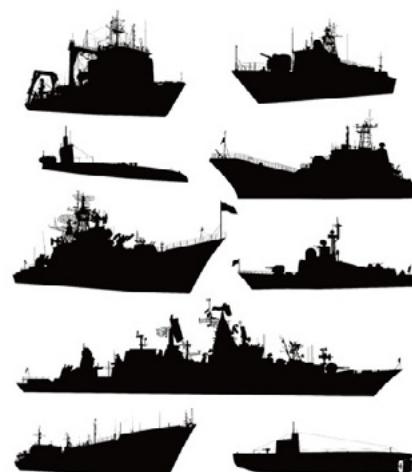
**Potential Future Purchases:** The purchase of two further Gowind corvettes from France is currently being considered after the delivery of the FREMM frigate in August. The bid has already been made and is currently under discussion with DCNS. The recent visit of French defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to Cairo in late July suggests that further OPV purchases from France are a distinct possibility.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Defence Web, FREMM Frigate Tahya Misr departs for Egypt, 23/07/2015

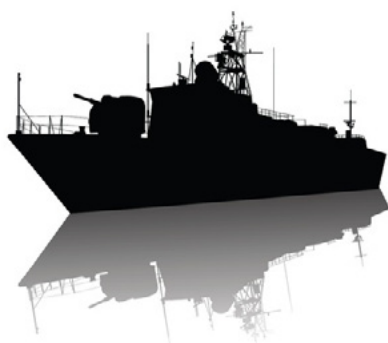
<sup>4</sup> Defence Web, Egypt interested in more Corvettes, 27/07/2015

<sup>5</sup> Defence News, DCNS Exports Pegged to Egypt Frigate Order, 21/02/2015

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***This 50-metre support vessel, to be built by French shipyard Piriou, has been designed to transport vehicles, cargo, water and fuel as it is fitted with two handling cranes and a bow ramp to allow for speedy loading/unloading onto beaches, docks or other vessels***



## Morocco

Much like Egypt, Morocco has a lengthy coastline to patrol and protect against the myriad threats to its national security and economy. Cannabis smuggling from Morocco to mainland Spain and elsewhere in southern Europe is of particular interest to the Coast Guard as the size and diversity of illegal consignments continues to rise.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, key ports such as Casablanca, Tangier and Safi are playing an increasingly vital role in the future of Morocco's economy, calling for greater levels of investment in OPVs to protect this critical infrastructure from seaborne threats.

## Recent OPV Purchases

**2008-2012: \$816 million – Three SIGMA class frigates:** Ordered from Dutch company Damen Schelde Shipbuilding, these three vessels were delivered over the course of four and a half years, significantly expanding the Royal Moroccan Navy's OPV capabilities.

Equipped with a comprehensive suite of electronic surveillance and tracking systems, the SIGMA frigates have already proved invaluable in vessel interdiction and humanitarian missions. These systems include: a Smart-S Mk2 surveillance radar, a LIROD Mk 2 tracking radar, a Thales Kingklip sonar system, an IFF system, an integrated communication system comprising external communication system and FOCON internal communication subsystem, two target designation sights, a VIGILE ESM system, a SCORPION ECM system and an integrated navigation system.<sup>8</sup>

**2013: \$676 million – FREMM frigate:** Again, the reasons the

versatile FREMM frigate appealed to the Moroccan Navy are similar to those that prompted the Egyptians to purchase one in 2014. With its aft helicopter hangar able to accommodate medium helicopters like the NH90, EH101 and Cougar, the frigate makes for an excellent OPV that is capable of fulfilling conventional naval warfare roles as well as vessel interdiction.<sup>9</sup>

## 2015: Price undisclosed – Landing Craft Tank (LCT):

This 50-metre support vessel, to be built by French shipyard Piriou, has been designed to transport vehicles, cargo, water and fuel as it is fitted with two handling cranes and a bow ramp to allow for speedy loading/unloading onto beaches, docks or other vessels.<sup>10</sup>

## Potential Future Purchases:

The Moroccan Royal Navy has undergone significant expansion in recent years with the purchases mentioned above. Naval procurement sources still suggest that there is a possibility of one or two submarines being added to its strength, although this has not resulted in any firm tenders being produced in Morocco to date. It seems more likely, given the scope and scale of its anti-smuggling, drug-trafficking commitments, that more frigates, corvettes and smaller patrol craft will be needed by the coastal kingdom in the coming years.

<sup>6</sup> *Defence Web, Egypt interested in more Corvettes, 27/07/2015*

<sup>7</sup> *The Independent, Britons and Dutch battle for control of cannabis smuggling, 29/07/2015*

<sup>8</sup> *Defence Web, Moroccan Navy receives third and final SIGMA frigate, 11/09/2012*

<sup>9</sup> *Second Line of Defence, Morocco Modernises its Navy: the Latest FREMM Frigate prepares to join the Fleet, 12/07/2013*

<sup>10</sup> *Morocco World News, Morocco to buy a landing craft tank from France, 11/07/2015*



## Algeria

Recent years have seen the Algerian Navy expand significantly as its government aims to crack down on smuggling, illegal migration and indigenous terrorism. These particular threats mostly affect Algeria's harbours and maritime communication routes as well as ships passing through the Straits of Gibraltar. Consequently, the need for an advanced, well equipped fleet capable of effectively patrolling the country's 1000 km of coastline is more pressing than ever before.

### Recent OPV Purchases

#### 2012: Two Tiger class corvettes:

Another light and versatile corvette-class vessel, the Tiger corvette is designed for anti-submarine, anti-aircraft and anti-surface vessel combat and it particularly suited for offshore patrolling duties.<sup>11</sup>

At the time Algeria's surface fleet comprised of only three 1970s-era Koni-class antisubmarine frigates, six corvettes, 22 patrol and coastal combat vessels, three amphibious vessels and three logistics and support ships, making the two advanced Tiger class vessels a welcome addition.<sup>12</sup>

#### 2012-2014: \$2.7 billion – Two MEKO A-200 class

**frigates:** ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) provided the Algerian Navy with the first of the two frigates in December 2014. These Algerian variants are equipped with

one Oto Melara 127/64 LW medium-calibre gun, provision for up to 32 vertically launched Denel Dynamics Umkhonto-IR point defence missiles with space for up to 16 Saab/Diehl BGT RBS 15 Mk 3 anti-ship missiles, two MSI-Defence 30 mm single guns, four Rheinmetall MASS soft-kill decoy launchers, a Saab Sea Giraffe AMB G-band 3-D surveillance radar, and two Saab CEROS 200 radar/electro-optical trackers.<sup>13</sup>

Potential Future Purchases: Algeria's long-term procurement plan for additional naval vessels focuses heavily on an anti-piracy role as the country's main ports remain of vital economic importance, as does the sanctity of its coastline.

Additionally, Algeria has already demonstrated that it is willing to purchase from a wide variety of shipyards (German, Russian, Pakistani etc) in order to equip the navy with its required craft. Given this context, further OPV purchasing deals seem almost inevitable, with all manner of international vendors open to the opportunities available. Currently, the Algerian Government has the option to purchase two more frigates from TKMS which industry analysts expect to be agreed within the next two years.

<sup>11</sup> Sputnik News, Russia to build two Tiger corvettes for Algerian Navy, 20/06/2011

<sup>12</sup> Defence Web, Algeria purchases two tiger corvettes from Russia, 01/07/2011

<sup>13</sup> HS Jane's 360, First Algerian MEKO A-200 frigate undocked, 11/12/2014

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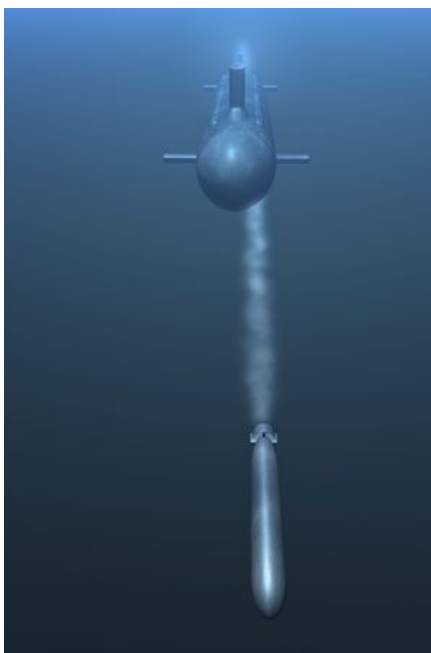
## Advanced Vessels for an Expanding Role

The North African countries examined here (along with Tunisia, Libya and Sudan) face many similar threats to their national security and to their economic wellbeing. Piracy and terrorist activities threaten the sanctity of their maritime trade and industry. Smuggling and illicit goods trafficking promotes corruption, social disorder and the growth of the shadow economy. The non-state threats to North African countries represent a real and present danger that cannot be ignored.

The growing maritime menace being experienced in the region has led to a significant expansion of the respective countries' navies through the purchasing of OPVs. Not only are the frigates, corvettes and smaller attack and patrol craft capable of carrying out vessel interdiction missions to quell piracy and smuggling, they are also suited to supporting their surface fleets in conventional naval combat, should the need arise.

The civil uprisings in Egypt and Algeria in recent years have demonstrated that the region – while it is currently stabilising – is no stranger to serious and prolonged conflicts. Therefore, the procurement of OPVs secures two ongoing sources of strategic benefit at once: the heightened security of key port infrastructure and coastal areas, as well as the improved combat capabilities of the national naval forces in question.

Should the current geopolitical landscape continue to feature the same type of threats, the countermeasures offered by advanced OPVs will almost certainly continue to rise in popularity in North Africa.



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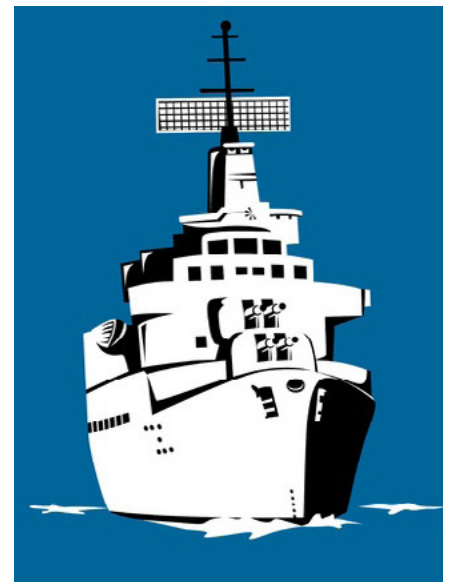
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The respective governments of North Africa are looking to expand their coast guard and naval forces by securing advanced **Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs)** that have the capability to fulfill a wide range of roles with precision and confidence. This is due to the increasingly complex and severe threat landscape emerging across the region's coastal areas in the manifold forms of smuggling, piracy and asymmetrical maritime terrorism. Download this paper to gain further insight into the nature of these threats as well as the OPV purchasing trends currently being experienced in North Africa.

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