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5.6 Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs)

5.6.1 Summary

The used international market for offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) will be very restricted in that potential hulls for resale will be far fewer than what may be required on the international market. Currently 23 nations operate OPVs with the potential for up to nine additional operators from 2004 through 2013.

Prospective suppliers will be limited in number, with only eleven potential suppliers for a total of 48 hulls available for resale over the decade. At least eighteen prospective recipients will probably be in the market for such vessels in the same time frame.

One major factor that could alleviate the shortfalls anticipated for this type of vessel is the potential for increased indigenous construction by nations that typically do not build OPVs. Due to the low relative low cost of construction and lack of sophistication of these types of vessels, more sea services are relying on indigenous new construction vice the procurement of used vessels from the international market.

The following table depicts those nations that must be considered prospective suppliers and prospective recipients for used vessels from 2004 through 2013:

Prospective Suppliers of Used OPVs (2004-2013)		Prospective Recipients of Used OPVs (2004-2013)	
Argentina	Ireland	Algeria	Mexico
Canada	Mexico	Argentina	New Zealand
Finland	Norway	Bangladesh	Nigeria
France	Spain	Colombia	Peru
India	United States	Ecuador	Philippines
		Estonia	Sri Lanka
		Indonesia	Tunisia
		Latvia	Uruguay
		Libya	Venezuela
		Lithuania	

5.6.2 Navies, Coast Guards, and Police Forces With OPV Requirements

There are only a handful of nations that presently operate naval, coast guard, or police vessels that can be classified as OPVs. OPVs are identified by AMI as vessels over 700 tons that typically conduct long-range patrols in a nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). OPVs are generally armed with minimal sensors and weaponry including medium or minor caliber guns and search radars and may employ a small to medium sized helicopter.



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During the past five years, there has been a continuing trend in the recognition of the importance of a nation's EEZ and as that recognition continues to grow in the future, there will be an increasing number of nations seeking OPVs to assist in meeting their surveillance requirement.

Most countries that currently operate OPVs typically build them indigenously with several new entrants likely in the future. Unlike most other types of ships discussed (cruisers, destroyers, frigates etc), many shipbuilding countries of the world can build OPVs due to the lack of sophisticated weaponry and integration problems associated with these vessels. As an example, many OPVs are built to commercial standards and a nation that can successfully build large civilian vessels such as petroleum tankers may also be able to build OPVs with assistance from an experienced naval shipbuilder.

It must also be noted that these countries can also build these vessels at a fairly inexpensive price competing with the more traditional naval shipbuilders. Several examples include Malaysia, which began its New Generation Patrol Vessel Program (NGPV) in 2001 in which most will be built at Malaysia's Lumut Naval Shipyard and Mexico's Justo Mendez OPV Program currently underway at several civilian shipyards in Mexico.

With the growth in indigenous construction rising simultaneously with naval requirements, there may be less of a demand for used OPVs on the international market than might have been expected.

Some sea services that may be very restricted in procurement funding and face very little in the way of air and subsurface threats, may also utilize OPVs as a substitute for the larger and more heavily armed vessels, such as frigates and corvettes. As an example, Nigeria has an aging frigate but faces no air and subsurface threats, possibly justifying an OPV as a replacement for its frigate as well as for general patrol duties in the nation's EEZ.

The navies, coast guards, and police forces of the world that currently operate offshore patrol vessels include:

- Argentina
- Canada
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Japan
- Iceland
- India
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Norway
- Philippines
- Portugal
- Russia
- Sri Lanka
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- United States



There are also several sea services that are not currently operating an OPV force, however, have just started or are planning OPV programs through 2013. These sea services include:

- Chile
- Denmark
- Malaysia
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Oman
- Pakistan
- South Africa
- Thailand

5.6.3 Prospective Suppliers

Generally speaking, the nations that will be mentioned in this report as prospective suppliers are those sea services that are currently operating OPVs, regardless of the age of the vessels. The majority of OPVs that may appear on the used international market are for the most part past their mid-life point although they could still be candidates for transfer from 2004 through 2013.

Nations that currently operate OPVs that may be candidates for transfer to a recipient nation over the next decade (2004-2013) are listed as follows with the prospective decommissioning date, vessel class, number available and country:

Projected Years of Decommissioning	Class	Number Available	Country
2012-2014	Halcon	5	Argentina
2007-2017	Misc.	4	Canada
2012-2013	Tursas	2	Finland
Anytime	Albatross	1	France
2013-2019	Vikram	6	India
2013	Eithne	1	Ireland
2009-2010	P21	3	Ireland
2012-2013	Uribe	6	Mexico
2011-2012	Nordkapp	3	Norway
2006	Descubierta	5	Spain
2007	Hamilton	12	United States
	(Coast Guard)		

5.6.4 Prospective Recipients

Prospective recipients for used OPVs will more than likely be coastal sea services that do not have the financial resources to procure new OPVs and/or probably do not have the shipbuilding capacity to realize an indigenous program. For the recipient sea service, the used international market is probably the best choice and some times the last resort in gaining access to affordable vessels.

Even if the used vessel is old, if the ship is in good material condition and the receiving sea service believes that it can maintain the transferred vessel, it will more than likely procure the candidate vessel. As an example, Nigeria procured Balsam class buoy tenders from the United States for use as patrol boats even though the vessels were built in the 1940s. Nigeria did not match either category listed above and moved forward with vessels that were obviously past their effective service lives. Nigeria literally had no other alternatives and received the buoy tenders as a grant from the United States Government.

As the corvette hull and OPV hull are often very similar the sea service may also procure used corvettes to fulfill the EEZ patrol mission. The receiving sea service can simply remove the unnecessary weapon systems and make a very effective OPV out of a corvette.

This is exactly what Spain did with first of its Descubierta corvettes and why the class is listed here as well as in

the Corvette Section. Therefore, prospective recipients should also review the corvette section as well.

Here are some nations that may be leading candidates in the acquisition of used OPVs from the international market:

- Algeria
- Argentina
- Bangladesh
- Colombia
- Ecuador
- Estonia
- Indonesia
- Latvia
- Libya
- Lithuania
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Peru
- Philippines
- Sri Lanka
- Tunisia
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

As there are many sea services that are cash strapped as well as a growing number of nations that are identifying OPV requirements for EEZ protection, it is difficult to accurately predict when and where OPVs will be transferred and which nation will procure them. Therefore, in contrast to the previous sections on major surface combatants, this section will not attempt to detail each country's requirement and likely source of ships.

Photos Courtesy Of:

- Page 67: US Coast Guard
- Page 68: Royal Norwegian Navy
- Page 69: Indian Coastguard

