

Pentagon Report Cites Rapidly Modernizing Chinese Navy



A Chinese Type 052C destroyer, the Changchun, in Malaysia in 2017.

ARLINGTON, Virginia

– China’s first home-built aircraft carrier is likely to join the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) fleet this year, a highlight of China’s effort to modernize its fleet with modern, farther-ranging platforms and weapons.

Construction

began on a second aircraft carrier in 2018, said a new report to Congress from the Defense Department, “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019.” This carrier, which should reach the PLAN fleet in 2022, is likely to be fitted with a catapult aircraft launch system, according to the report.

A coastal

defense navy during the Cold War, the PLAN is continuing a two-decade build-up with numerous blue-water platforms

“The PLAN is

rapidly replacing obsolescent, generally single-purpose platforms in favor of larger, multirole combatants featuring advanced anti-ship, anti-air and anti-submarine weapons and sensors,” the report said. “This

modernization

aligns with China's growing emphasis on the maritime domain and increasing demands on the PLAN to conduct operational tasks at expanding distances from the Chinese mainland using multimission, long-range, sustainable naval platforms possessing robust self-defense capabilities."

"Modernization

of China's submarine force remains a high priority for the PLAN," the report said. "The PLAN currently operates four nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), six nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN) and 50 conventionally powered attack submarines (SS). The speed of growth of the submarine force has slowed and will likely grow to between 65 and 70 submarines by 2020."

The PLAN also

continues to modernize its surface warship fleet.

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A new Pentagon report to Congress on China's naval modernization

China has

built new guided-missile cruisers (CGs), guided-missile destroyers (DDGs) and guided-missile frigates (FFGs) that "will significantly upgrade the PLAN's air

defense, anti-ship, and anti-submarine capabilities. These assets will be critical as the PLAN expands operations into distant seas beyond the range of shore-based air defense systems” the report said.

China has built four Renhai-class CGs over the last two years and has several more under construction. The lead CG is scheduled to join the fleet in 2019. At least three Luyang-class DDGs joined the PLAN fleet in 2018, bringing the total to nine with at least four more under construction. A larger variant forthcoming, Luyang III, will be equipped with a vertical launcher system.

China also emphasizes small surface combatants, with 27 or more Jiangkai II FFGs and more than 40 Jiangdao-class corvettes, with more of both types under construction.

All new attack submarines and surface combatants are being armed with modern anti-ship missiles.

“The PLAN recognizes that long-range ASCMs require a robust, over-the-horizon targeting capability to realize their full potential,” the new Pentagon report said. “China is investing in reconnaissance, surveillance, command, control and communications systems at the strategic, operational and tactical levels to provide high-fidelity targeting information to surface and subsurface launch

platforms.”

China also is building a fleet of amphibious warfare ships, adding three to the current five Yuzhao-class amphibious transport dock ships.

China also is expanding the PLAN marine corps from two brigades and 10,000 marines to seven brigades and 30,000 marines by 2020. The Chinese marine corps also now has its own commander and a new central headquarters.