

Navy to test Israeli-made missiles next month

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The Philippine Navy (PN) is ready to test-fire the missiles in its Multi-Purpose Attack Craft (MPAC).

Navy chief Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad said they will test-fire the Israeli-ER surface-to-surface missiles which are integrated in the MPAC in line with its continuing modernization program.

This will include the upgrading of its naval bases and facilities to accommodate additional floating and subsurface naval assets that the Navy is eyeing to procure in the future, he said.

“This coming July we might be testing our very first missile and we want people who can operate and maintain this type of weapon systems,” Empedrad said.

On top of the three missilefiring MPACs, the defense department is planning to buy additional attack craft which is highly effective and capable of conducting maritime patrol and interdiction operations.

Empedrad added the Navy is also upgrading all its naval bases and key facilities to accommodate incoming new floating assets, to include the two missile-frigates that the government has acquired from South Korea’s shipbuilder Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI).

He said the two frigates are slated for delivery in 2020 with the Navy, under the Armed Forces of the Philippines’ Horizon 2 Modernization Program, eyeing to purchase two corvettes and six offshore patrol vessels.

Empedrad stressed the importance for the Navy to acquire submarines, describing the sub-surface warship as a strategic deterrence to other navies out to challenge its capabilities.

“There are lots of ship capabilities we are acquiring but more importantly we want to have submarines. If we have the submarines, other navies will start to respect us,” he said.

Empedrad though admitted that even if the government approves the submarine procurement project, it would take seven to 10 years.

Empedrad said the Navy must start preparation by conducting parallel moves involving the upgrade of its naval and key facilities in order to accommodate the soon-to-be-delivered ships and those to be acquired later.

For now, five of the Navy’s warships have to anchor in the open sea with engines running, in the absence of a deep and safe harbor save for Subic Bay.

“We are now upgrading our facilities to include Sangley Point in Cavite and we need P11 billion for this. We also need a storage facility for our missiles and torpedoes with the required funding of P7 billion,” Empedrad said.

He said the Navy is eyeing Caballo Island at the mouth of Manila Bay and Subic Bay as possible missile and torpedo storage facilities.