

Israel plans for naval buildup

http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/07/09/israel_poised_to_ramp_up_naval_spending

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Energy resources are a **hot commodity** in the Levant Basin days, and with 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil, 122 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas, and 5 billion barrels of natural gas liquids at stake, the Israeli defense ministry is **asking** for a "one-time budget increase" of about \$760 million to boost its naval capacity in the Mediterranean Sea so it can better protect the country's offshore natural gas platforms. Though Israel **purchased** its fourth Dolphin-class diesel-electric submarine from Germany earlier this year to the tune of over \$500 million, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Benny Gantz are on board with the **plan**, which "calls for adding four new warships to Israel's naval fleet and deploying hundreds of soldiers in the area."

Natural gas discoveries in the early twenty-first century have created a military debacle for Israel, which does not have demarcated maritime boundary with Lebanon. All of the multinational gas platforms are privately owned and fall within Israel's exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles from the coast, but they are **located** beyond Israel's territorial waters, which only stretch 12 nautical miles from land.

Israel's first offshore natural gas discovery, Tamar, is not slated to come online until 2013, but the defense institution **fears** that the platforms are already targets for terrorist attacks from Hezbollah, which **receives** long-range missiles from Syria. The Israeli navy does not traditionally get the lion's share of the defense budget, and top officials are worrying. As one anonymous senior Israeli military planner **told** Reuters, "We will do our best, but not without a major boost to our capabilities." In May, senior naval officer Capt. Sassi Hodeda **told** the *Los Angeles Times* that the navy wants to improve its radar systems and use unmanned surface vehicles to patrol, but added that they require "special technology" the navy does not have.

If the navy does receive the extra funding, the vessels it purchases "will have to **accommodate** an advanced radar system, a helicopter and a launch system capable of firing long-range air defense and surface-to-surface missiles." **According** to the *Jerusalem Post*, the options include designing the ships in the U.S. using foreign military aid, and building them in South Korea, but if Israel is really looking for international help, maybe it should consider **ratifying** the Law of the Sea Treaty first.