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ORC makes waves

By Richard Scott

UK boatbuilder Holyhead Marine is continuing deliveries of its Offshore Raiding Craft (ORC) to the UK Royal Marines – and has revealed two new variants of the basic design.

A total of 40 production craft are on order to replace the marines' existing Rigid Raider Craft Mk 3 assault craft. Primarily designed to deliver troops onto a beach from up to 30 nautical miles offshore, the ORC can also be reconfigured with ballistic protection to serve in the Fire Support Platform role.

The aluminium-hulled ORC, based on a Tiger Marine T9000 hull form, features a vee-hull, a closed-cell buoyant collar (fitted around its gunwale) and is powered by twin Steyr M256 inboard marine diesel engines. These drive a pair of Rolls-Royce FF270 waterjets, through ZF63 reduction gears and carbon-fibre shafts, to deliver a maximum speed of more than 35kt.

The craft can carry a 1,500kg payload and the

aggregate of eight fully equipped marines plus two crew, to a range approaching 300 nautical miles.

Furthermore, the craft's design affords good manoeuvrability and acceleration, enabling it to turn on its own axis and stop in 1.5 boat lengths.

Holyhead Marine began production deliveries in 2006 and has to date delivered 15 craft. The 16th ORC is displaying its capabilities in the DSEi maritime demonstration ahead of delivery later this month.

The first 12 craft are in service with 539 Assault Squadron Royal Marines (ASRM) and a further two are in the hands of the Royal Marines Training Section.



539 ASRM has already deployed the craft to Iraq for operations as part of Operation 'Telic' – some ORCs were used successfully in the Fire Support Platform role. During early 2007, 539 ASRM was tasked as part of Operation 'Troy', a high-profile crackdown on smuggling and insurgency on the Shatt Al Arab waterway in and around Basra.

Holyhead Marine is now looking at two further variants of the ORC: a mid-console variant specifically designed as a dedicated fully armoured Fire Support Platform offering optimal arcs of fire; and a forward console variant more suited to carrying troops or a bulk payload aft.

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