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HONG KONG STANDARD

\$400m update of Marine Police begins

By Peter Loke

THE Royal Hongkong Police's \$400-million programme to modernise and expand the mini-armada of command and operational craft in the Marine Regional Command will come on line in 1990.

"In a few weeks we will take delivery of the first of two Hong-kong-designed, Hongkong-built command launches," the Regional Commander for the Marine Police, Mr John MacDonald, told the *The Standard*. It will be a new class of district command vessels for the Marine Police. They are being built to specifications by Hongkong Shipyard and will be fitted with ultra-modern equipment to improve their capabilities.

For the first time in the police fleet, the command vessel and its sister craft (which will be delivered in October) will have sophisticated equipment installed, including satellite navigation, weatherfax and thermometers (for scanning the seas at night).

The two, 400-tonne, 40-metre vessels will go into service patrolling the waters and perimeters of the territory of Eastern and Southern districts.

The cost of these two command launches and their equipment will be in the region of \$25 million to \$30 million.

Three similar launches will be built for the Marine Police in the next year or two — two to re-

44
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built at the Chung Wah shipyards to replace the older wooden-hulled craft, and they will come into service at regular intervals from August.

Another major development in the fleet modernisation programme will concern more efficient craft to handle the duties of the small boat unit which is responsible for a great part of the inshore patrols.

Even though the actual perimeter of the waters surrounding Hong Kong is about 100 kilometres, the Marine Police are responsible for patrolling a coastline of over 2,000 kilometres involving 244 islands.

Mr MacDonald added while

the Marine Police had not gained as much publicity as their counterparts on land or even that of the Customs and Excise, the fact that the Marine Police maintain a very high profile at sea had served as a strong deterrent to illegal activities.

"Anyone who thinks of doing something illegal like smuggling, takes quite a big risk with the Marine Police who are on the alert 24 hours a day throughout the year," he said.

Asked if there was any further progress on the much speculated redevelopment of the Marine Police headquarters, the regional commander said there was still nothing to report.