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10 September  
2019

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## Behind US State Dept.'s Approval of Support to Egyptian Navy

### Mahmoud Gamal

The United Press International ([UPI](#)) has revealed details of the State Department's approval of a sale of a package of technical support to the Egyptian Navy, which is classified as the world's sixth-ranked navy.

According to the US agency, the U.S. State Department approved the potential sale of a \$554 million package of technical support for the Egyptian Navy. The package calls for technical and maintenance support, known as Follow-On Technical Support ((FOTS), of various U.S.-made ships in the Egyptian fleet. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale on July 29, 2019.

The contract, announced on Tuesday (July 30), specifically mentions that the sale is essential to "maintain Egypt's national security, regional stability and the free flow of worldwide commerce via the Suez Canal."

It is noteworthy that the Egyptian Navy is the sixth-largest navy in the world, measured by the number of ships and is charged with protection of the coastlines of the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. It maintains two fleets, one for each of the seas, and includes ships, aircraft, submarines, amphibious craft and patrol forces.

The United Press International added that the "Recent hostile actions by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman have caused concerns in Egypt. Military strategists are seeking to reinforce security in the Red Sea for better protection of maritime movement through Egypt's Suez Canal."

Egyptian officials said they expect the rise in Iranian belligerence in the Strait of Hormuz to increase dependence by international maritime on the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, but those routes are far from immune from being disrupted.

"Iran will most likely use the Houthi militia to threaten the maritime movement in the region," said Tarek Fahmi, a professor of political science at Cairo University. "The Houthis are Iran's arm in this part of the world."

Iranian activities in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz have led world powers to consider an international naval force to protect maritime traffic.

Houthis attacked two Saudi oil tankers off Yemen's Red Sea coast in July 2018, forcing Saudi Arabia to halt oil shipments. In July 2018, the Houthis attacked two Saudi oil tankers off Yemen's Red Sea coast, forcing Saudi Arabia to halt oil shipments. It led Egypt to increase its presence at the southern entrance of the Red Sea and increase spending on modernization of its navy. Cairo has invested billions of dollars in helicopter carriers and speedboats from France and new submarines from Germany.

The request by Egypt announced on Tuesday calls for material and support of the country's four Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigates, its four fast missile craft, its four mine hunter ships, and nine fast patrol craft. The prime contractor is VSE Corp., headquartered in Virginia.

According to the Israeli intelligence website, "[Depka](#)", and other platforms interested in military affairs, the Egyptian government's \$ 554 million 5-year contract includes purchase of Follow on Technical Support (FOTS) that provides for material and labor services in support of Oliver Hazard Perry Class Frigates (FFG-7 class ships), Fast Missile Craft (FMC), Mine Hunter Coastal (MHC) ships, Coastal Mine Hunter (CMH) ships, and 25 Meter and 28 Meter Fast Patrol Craft (FPC).

### **The deal will support the US foreign policy and national security**

According to the notice sent to Congress by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), a division of the Pentagon, the deal "will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to provide a strategic partner with critical support for multiple type ships responsible for Egypt's maritime security. The proposed sale is essential to maintain Egypt's national security, regional stability, and the free flow of worldwide commerce via the Suez Canal," adding that "Egypt intends to use this technical maintenance and service support to ensure the Egyptian Navy is operationally capable of providing coastal defense and security. The proposed sale will increase the Egyptian Navy's material and operational readiness. Egypt will have no difficulties absorbing this support into its armed forces."

Egypt has other maritime craft made by France, Germany, South Korea, Spain, Poland, China, Britain, Italy and the Soviet Union, as well as several craft made in Egypt.