

DEFENCE

Navy ordered to rework sub budget plans

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The Defence Ministry has returned the submarine procurement project to the navy to rework the budget, according to a navy source.

The project to buy three Chinese submarines valued at 36 billion baht was earlier put on the cabinet agenda.

But the ministry now wants the navy to extend the tied-over budget so payments for the subs will be spread over 10 years rather than seven years as was proposed.

The source said the change would leave more money for maintenance of the subs. The details could be returned to the cabinet as early as its meeting tomorrow.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan earlier instructed the navy to launch a public relations drive to educate people about the necessity to commission the submarines for defence prowess.

Assistant navy chief Narongsak Nabangchang, who heads the procurement project, has published a white paper containing essential background information about the submarines.

The project will come under the supervision of Adm Na Areenij, the chief-of-staff who replaces the incumbent navy chief, Adm Kraisorn Jansuwanich, today.

Last week, Adm Kraisorn said he had tried his utmost to push for the submarine procurement.

However, the project could not be finalised in time for the next fiscal year, which starts today.

After the project is approved by the government, it will take about seven years before the subs are ready for deployment.

The source, however, indicated the project is still up in the air. Adm Kraisorn has said his successor may decide to reconsider the purchase.

The source said Adm Na may opt instead for subs manufactured in Germany or South Korea. He may also scrap the project altogether and buy a frigate.



Na: Mulls options for submarine purchase