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China's second aircraft carrier will join the Chinese navy sooner than expected

China has accelerated the last phase of construction of its second aircraft carrier which will join the Chinese navy sooner than expected. The assembly works were due to be completed in 2020 but they are well ahead of schedule and the new carrier is now likely to go into service by late 2018 or early 2019.

The Chinese navy has already one aircraft carrier which was developed from the hull of a Russian carrier and uses the original Russian-designed propulsion system. The new one is entirely made in China and is a clear indication of China's technological progress and its ability to challenge the US's dominant position in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

Hu Wenming, general manager of the new Type 001A carrier, told China's state television that its propulsion system were successfully tested and will start to formally enter the mooring test phase. The testing is a key and necessary step before the carrier is put into service.

Early pictures posted on the internet by military enthusiasts showed runway track lines were printed on the deck of the Type 001A while scaffolding outside the control tower was dismantled. These images hinted that equipment installation work on the carrier was almost completed – another sign that the carrier is close to being ready for service.

The new carrier was produced by state-owned Dalian Shipbuilding Industry Offshore Company in Liaoning province, which also spent more than eight years to refurbish its sister warship. At the most intense period of ship building, more than 5,000 people from across the country were hired for the project.

In addition, 532 state-owned or private scientific research units and their academics took part in producing ancillary facilities. More than 40 companies came from non-military sectors, reflecting Beijing's push to integrate military and civilian development.

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