



New high speed landing craft unveiled at BioMarine

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A new, high tech catamaran that could significantly reduce the time it takes to land equipment or troops in conflict zones or areas hit by humanitarian disasters like floods or Tsunamis, was unveiled at BioMarine on Monday.

The L-Cat combines the carrying capacity of a traditional flat-bottomed landing craft with the speed of a catamaran, thanks to a revolutionary central deck, which can be quickly raised or lowered.

Its main purpose is to serve as a 'shuttle' between a major ocean-going vessel and the shore. The revolutionary vessel is typically manned by a crew of four. When the L-Cat is at sea, it travels as a catamaran, with its deck raised between two outside hulls. This allows it to reach speeds of 20 to 30 knots, much faster than traditional landing craft.

As it approaches a beach, the deck can be lowered and a ramp extended, allowing the boat to either land its cargo – for example troops and military vehicles – or take on board up to 200 people in need of rescue.

The craft could also prove useful for coastguards as it can serve as a floating dock explained its designers, Constructions Industrielles de la Méditerranée (CNIM). In this mode, the boat can lower its central deck to below the water line while at sea, allowing it to launch fast, motorized inflatable dinghies, for example.

“This boat is considerable leap forward technologically,” said CNIM naval advisor Thierry O'Neill. CNIM say they have already had interest in the craft from the French navy and that the armed forces in Malaysia and Singapore are also seem keen on the L-Cat. O'Neill estimates that his company could sell around a dozen of the vessels over the coming years. The exact price of the L-Cat varies considerably, depending on the precise options a customer wants, but the vessel will probably sell for between €10 and €20 million a piece, said CNIM.
