

Oregonian Live – May 30, 2014

Oregon Iron Works' stealth boat projects draw national attention



Oregon Iron Works in February released a photo of the CCM Mk1 watercraft it designed and built for the military's Special Operations Command. (*Oregon Iron Works*)

By **Mike Francis** | mfrancis@oregonian.com

May 30, 2014 at 1:25 PM, updated May 30, 2014 at 1:33 P.M.

Jalopnik, one of the Gawker family of media sites, on Thursday wrote a piece describing some of the classified military watercraft that have been tested on the Columbia River.

([See Jalopnik's piece here.](#))

<http://foxtrotalpha.jalopnik.com/unmasking-the-columbia-rivers-mysterious-stealth-boats-1583093889>

The piece appears to describe some of the semi-submersible designs developed and built by Oregon Iron Works. This is something [The Oregonian first wrote about in 2005](#). From that story:

Oregon Iron Works, which is based in nearby Clackamas, has a \$10 million contract with the U.S. Navy to complete and test a specialty boat called SeaLion, which stands for SEAL Insertion, Observation and Neutralization. The first boat has been delivered, the company says; the second is under construction -- and under wraps.

So what's on the Columbia? "It's a boat for a particular customer who wishes to remain anonymous," says Chandra Brown, vice president for marketing at Oregon Iron Works.

Oregon Iron Works scored a big win in February when the Special Operations Command **awarded the company a contract worth up to \$400 million** over seven years to build a new fleet of nimble combat watercraft.

While it's yet to be seen how many boats Oregon Iron Works will build, or how quickly, the win means "a significant number" of new jobs, said Corey Yraguen, president of the privately held company, which currently employs slightly fewer than 500 people.

More recently, Oregon Iron Works **said last week it had agreed to be absorbed** into Vigor Industrial, the Swan Island-based ship repair company. The two companies are calling the deal a merger. The companies hope to complete the deal by the end of June.

-Mike Francis

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Boat May Be Hush-hush, but It's Creating Lots of Noise

BY MIKE FRANCIS

July 23, 2005 Newhouse News Service

PORTLAND, Ore. -- The boat is easily noticed -- about 70 feet long, a sleek design similar to a stealth airplane's -- and roars up and down the Columbia River at high speeds.

Yet no one -- its builder, the military, local river patrollers -- will talk about it.

So the mystery deepens; the rumors take off.

Here's what is publicly known: Oregon Iron Works, which is based in nearby Clackamas, has a \$10 million contract with the U.S. Navy to complete and test a specialty boat called SeaLion, which stands for SEAL Insertion, Observation and Neutralization.

The first boat has been delivered, the company says; the second is under construction -- and under wraps.

So what's on the Columbia?

"It's a boat for a particular customer who wishes to remain anonymous," says Chandra Brown, vice president for marketing at Oregon Iron Works.

Brown will confirm that Oregon Iron Works has a contract for the next version of the SeaLion, and that the boat being tested on the Columbia is not it.

"No. The SeaLion II is under construction."

Is it seaworthy?

"No," she says.

The Navy's Sea Systems Command, which oversees experimental technology projects, including the SeaLion, helps only a little.

"The craft looks somewhat similar, but I'm not sure it's the SeaLion," said one of the department's public affairs officers, via e-mail. Her e-mail included a picture of the genuine SeaLion, which corresponds to the other SeaLion images on the Internet.

The boat zooming up and down the Columbia has some of the same details as the SeaLion but also has a lot of differences. But, of course, the public -- perhaps -- has not yet seen the SeaLion II.

With all the tight lips, river watchers are reduced to gossip.

"It's supposedly built for the Israeli navy," says Steve Ryan, who has owned Ryan Marine on the Columbia River for 32 years. "It's supposedly a stealth patrol boat."

The Multnomah County sheriff's river patrol, which plies the Columbia, also can't talk.

"They gave us a heads-up," says Sgt. Todd Lautenbach, referring to Oregon Iron Works. "They said we were going to get calls. They asked us to refer them all to them."

Lautenbach lets on that he knows what the boat is, and who it was built for. And he says Ryan's description of a 4,000-horsepower motor -- or jet engine -- on the mystery craft is not out of line.

He won't comment directly on Ryan's rumblings that it was built for the Israeli navy.

"That's the buzz on the river, huh?" says Lautenbach with an amused tone. "Sometimes those guys know what they're talking about."

Is this the answer?

"And sometimes they don't," the sergeant says.

July 23, 2005

(Mike Francis is a staff writer for The Oregonian of Portland, Ore. He can be contacted at mikefrancis@news.oregonian.com).

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