Project Explorer

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The Project Explorer class Multi-role vessel was built by Ingalls Shipbuilding of Pascagoula, Mississippi. Eight units of the class were laid down, one a conventional diesal powered ship delivered to Morrow Industries in 1989 and used as a training ship, and seven of a modified design delivered to the project without engines or power plant.

The Project Explorer class is 47 meters long and 10 meters wide midship, with a displacement of 700 tons. It's engines cruise at 11 knots (about 20 kmh), with a maximum speed of 17 knots (around 32 kmh). All but the first example use four electric engines turning two props powered by four fusion power plants, two of which are needed to move the ship at its full speed. Fully loaded she draws 5 meters of water. Her safe operation depth is 6 meters of water or more, restricting her to deeper rivers and lakes, and to ocean use.

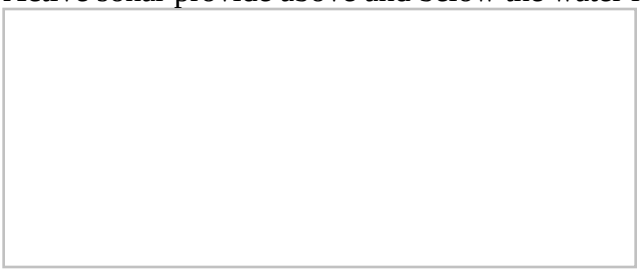
Armament includes a 20mm RH202 cannon with an 81mm M29 mortar forward of the deck house. The forward turret is powered but requires one or two human staff to operate. Side blocks restrict the weapon to an arc 180 degrees in front of the ship. A remote turret with 2x M88 12.7x99mm machineguns and rails for two stinger missiles sits on the deck house. Called the after turret, it is operated remotely from in the pilot house. It can also be slaved to the air search radar for automatic interception of low flying aircraft or missiles. Pintle mounts for heavy machineguns or general purpose machineguns exist on the main deck at each corner of the work deck. Unlike the turrets, these weapons can fire on craft adjacent to the ship.

Accomodations include 5 staterooms (capable of double occupancy) and a Captian's Cabin, for a maximum crew of 11. In practice, two of her spaces are multi-use rooms designed to be converted to special tasks. These include hospitol (with room for 5 medical staff, 4-8 long term patients beds (using sickbay and one stateroom), and two operating rooms. Engineering duties allow a 6-7 person engineer team with building supplies. Personal transport / rescue allows 4 rescue / security staff, and bunks for 30-35 people. Science duties allow for 6-7 Science personel and a well equipped lab space. Galley facilities exist to feed 50 people.

The Project Explorer is laid out in three decks, called the deck house, the main deck, and the lower deck. The pilots house, magazine, and engine / power plant spaces are armoured.

The Project Explorer has a minimum crew of seven, although three can operate it in a pinch. The seven person crew normally frozen inlcude the Captian, Ship's Engineer, Communicator, and a Mars, Recon, Science, and Engineering person acting as crew. The Captian and Ship's Engineer require special training, all other people are drawn from standard Project personel sources.

The ships electronics suite incluse a network of 9 Advanced Project Computers, full HF maritime radio, FM voice capability, ELF recievers and a SATCOM link. A 5km range Naval Radar, 15km range Air Warning Radar, and a 1cm Passive / Active sonar provide above and below the water information to the ship.



The large open space at the rear of the ship is the work deck. It is 17 meters long and 9 meters wide. Anything that the crane can lift onto the deck can be stored here. A Commando V-150, SK-5, or ACV could be lifted aboard and tied down. In a pinch, a pair of V-150 class vehicles and several XR-311 could be carried as cargo. Cargo is limited to around 60,000 kg of equipment or goods, more could be towed in a barge behind the ship. With heavy cargo and towing a barge, the Project Explorer rarely exceeds 10 knots, and rides a little lower in the water than shown, making her handle a bit more sluggishly.

Two small battery powered motor launches are carried, with the ability to seat 8 people each. In addition, rescue gear for 50 is carried in the standard load.