



▲ Ares Shipyard's CEO, Oriol López

Having recently celebrated its extraordinary 60th birthday, Aresa Shipyard, in Spain, is stronger, faster, and better than ever before. With a colourful and storied history spanning leisure, commercial and naval vessels, the company is harnessing all of its skills, experience and infrastructure as it consistently delivers on the demanding needs of modern clients. Aresa Shipyard's CEO, Oriol López, spoke to Richard Hagan about the company's impressive line-up of high speed, high quality naval and commercial vessels.

Spanish experience, INNOVATION AND ADDED VALUE



Aresa Shipyard's history can be traced back to 1961 when it was established by Oscar López.

By all accounts, the company got off to a strong start. During the 1970s and 1980s, it established a manufacturing relationship with a major Italian shipyard. In terms of this agreement, Aresa built the yard's models in Spain. The experience gained from that relationship provided the impetus for Aresa to subsequently design and begin producing its own range of leisure yachts. At that point in time, Aresa was a pioneer, being the only yard building yachts up to 24m in length.

The company's next major turning point arrived in the late 1980s when it concluded a contract with the Spanish navy to supply two different coastal patrol vessels to the state, with 23 units delivered in total. The contract was an unmitigated success, but the Spanish navy ultimately shifted its procurement strategy towards much larger vessels from government shipbuilder Navantia.

Nonetheless, its successful execution of that contract had solidified Aresa's presence in the naval market. Later on, it would prove to be key to the company's ongoing success today. Aresa began production for the commercial shipping sector in the early 1990s, before finally focusing on government projects in defence, fishing and transport from 2002 onwards for states around the world.

A modern defence and commercial contractor

Today, Aresa is a leading manufacturer of modern, highly capable vessels for the defence, commercial and fishing industries.

Its beating heart is its headquarters and production facility located a short drive north of Barcelona. The impressive 25,000 sqm factory floor supports its 100m long mooring berth and three 60m long hangers. At any given time, the company employs approximately 150 staff including permanent staff and temporary contractors.

Aresa's production strategy is built around manufacturing models that are adapted to suit its customers' specific needs, and then supporting those models for the long term through the provision of after-sales and servicing support.

Fast demand for fast boats

Modern naval doctrine is increasingly concerned by the threat posed by small, fast boats to naval vessels operating in shallower waters, especially along coastlines. In response, coastal governments have shown extensive interest in procuring their own small, light, fast attack and interceptor craft to meet and counter this threat.

Building very fast but capable boats sounds deceptively easy, but the truth is that it's a real challenge requiring special expertise.

"High-speed vessels, at the lengths we specialise in, are the most difficult types to build," Mr López added. "They must be secure but also robust enough for heavy-duty use."

Aresa has strategically positioned itself as a specialist builder within that niche. Its ability to build fast, safe, light and highly capable vessels for the world's navies has seen it becoming the manufacturer of choice for navies in the region. ▣



"We are really focused on small and medium-sized vessel construction. That's what's been coming to us in the last three projects we've executed," explained Mr López.

"This trend began emerging several years ago and it has led to a massive increase in demand from our customers for fast coastal patrol boats. Customers are looking for smaller, faster vessels with lower maintenance costs and shorter maintenance windows. Navies want faster vessels they can operate easily and get out of the harbour within minutes. We're now focusing on delivering these very fast boats.

"For example, our last order from the Saudi Navy was for ten vessels of 17m in length capable of reaching 60 knots. Following that, we delivered four 18m vessels capable of 40 knots to the Nigerian Navy."



Any colour as long as it's black

Naval special forces are a particularly enthusiastic customer for Aresa's boats. Naturally, its two latest product launches are aimed directly at this important market. The first of these is the Aresa 1500 Black Falcon High-Speed Interceptor – a fast interceptor craft designed specifically for navy seal and other special forces requirements.

The crew and passengers are safely and comfortably catered for with shock-absorbing seats by world-renowned specialist manufacturer Ullman Dynamics. Meanwhile, the boat is powered by three Yamaha 425 XTO outboards – a first for the Spanish boatbuilding industry and the first military craft in the world to receive this power package as well.

The Royal Saudi Navy has already taken delivery of ten Aresa 1500 Black Falcons and, based on the positive feedback from

the Saudi teams, more are expected to follow for other navies in the region, according to Mr López.

"The model's manoeuvrability, stability and control at high speed really impressed the Saudi Special Forces. It's travelling at more than 60 knots, which is impressive compared to similar models from France and the UK. This project will go down as a record for our company because of the customer's acceptance of the project and the way the navy is promoting it in the region."

The other new product is the Aresa 5000-4000 Peacestorm offshore patrol vessel. This substantial yet nimble craft is designed to operate effortlessly in shallower coastal waters. With an overall length of between 40m and 50m (depending on customer specifications), and a 10m beam, there's plenty of space onboard for naval operations of various kinds. Peacestorm will be powered by 7,500hp waterjets or propellers and, thanks to its lightweight construction, is expected to reach a top speed of between 20 and 30 knots.

"We are already in negotiation with three defence customers who are interested in this model," Mr López revealed.

Two Narwhal Rigid Inflatable Boats are carried on the aft deck for high-speed interception missions while the bridge, armoured to NIU Level III+ is combat-ready and designed to stay in the fight.

Mr López also wished to highlight a new boat the company has sold to the Nigerian Navy: The Aresa 1800 Fighter II is an aluminium patrol vessel featuring an armoured bridge. Able to reach speeds of 40 knots, the Fighter II is an evolution of the company's Fighter I coastal patrol vessel.

"We designed it to be easy to maintain and operate, whilst still including the latest technology like airband communications for communication with aircraft, and a vertical launching platform for the auxiliary vessel on board," he explained. "It features two engines of 1,250hp.

The Aresa 1800 Fighter II proved to be such a hit with the Nigerian Navy that Aresa expects additional contracts for these boats from both Nigeria and other countries.

Fishing for contracts in Angola & beyond

From 2004 to 2009, Aresa completed a major project for the Angolan government, manufacturing a massive fleet of 210 fishing vessels for a combined value of €84 million.

"We supplied seven different fishing vessel models and some coastal patrol vessels to protect the fishing fleet on the water. The project was a major highlight for us because it was one of the biggest of its kind ever signed in Spain," Mr López commented.

Another project highlight came in 2013-2017, when the company delivered 17 military vessels to the Cameroon government. It included technical support and a logistics program spanning five years for a combined value of €36 million.

In just the last three years from 2019 to 2022, Aresa has delivered €30 million worth of projects to its clients. "We show the market what we can do using the facts of our delivered work, not just through our words," Mr López stated emphatically.

Looking ahead, he concluded with some thoughts on the company's future goals:



"We want to consolidate our progress in the 30m to 60m professional and defence vessel size categories. Meanwhile, we'll continue increasing our manufacturing capabilities and capacity, through increasing the height of our

main hangers and adding more powerful rolling cranes.

"Our 60 year history of success in such a challenging market is proof that we can overcome any challenges through effort, hard work and passion."

