

## Brazil Spending US\$ 160 Million for Nuclear Sub to Protect Oil Fields

Contributed by Newsroom  
Sunday, 31 August 2008

The Brazilian government should spend US\$ 160 million by the end of next year on the development of a nuclear-powered submersible to protect the oil reserves found recently off its coast, said Brazil's Defense minister Nelson Jobim on Friday. The vessel, which officials hope to be complete by 2020, would be the first nuclear-powered submarine in Latin America and is being developed with Brazilian technology and lately French assistance.

Brazil does not have nuclear weapons. The submarine is the highlight of the Brazil's new defense plan, which is to be made public on September 7, Independence Day.

Brazil is believed to have earmarked US\$ 3.5 billion by the end of 2010 to upgrade its weapon systems, according to reports in the local media.

Speaking in Rio de Janeiro, Jobim said the upgrade includes provisions for a massive technology transfer from France, essential if Brazil hopes to have a nuclear submarine.

In February, French President Nicolas Sarkozy said France would transfer technology to Brazil for construction of the diesel-powered Scorpene attack submarine. It will serve as a model for a nuclear sub, Brazilian officials have said.

Brazil has discussed building a nuclear submarine for decades, and began a formal program in 1979. However with the return of democracy in 1985 plans were delayed and ultimately shelved and only last year Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, announced US\$ 540 million in new funding for the program and for existing uranium enrichment efforts.

The nation has five conventionally powered submarines and is expected to incorporate several of the Scorpene class submarines in the near future. Chile is the other South American country which has two Scorpene submarines delivered two years ago.

Brazil has been discussing defense policy and revamping its armed forces capabilities on mounting worries about protecting the recently discovered massive off-shore oil reserves and the resources rich Amazon.

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