

China launches ultra-deepwater semi-sub rig Bluewhale I



CIMC Raffles' Yantai shipyard held a naming and delivery ceremony for the Bluewhale I ultra-deepwater semi-submersible drilling rig last month in China.

The Chinese company said on February 13 that, as the first turnkey project in Chinese offshore ultra deepwater field, the Bluewhale I rig would be operated by China National Petroleum Offshore Engineering, a subsidiary of CNPC, together with Bluewhale Offshore. CNPC [hired the rig in August](#) last year.

As a reminder, the rig was one of two ordered by Frigstad Deepwater Ltd, a company that was jointly owned by Frigstad Offshore Group and CIMC, until late last year Frigstad Offshore [decided to exit](#) from its investment in Frigstad Deepwater's ordered newbuilds to position itself for the industry recovery.

As a consequence of the exit, Frigstad Deepwater Ltd became a wholly owned subsidiary of CIMC and was renamed CIMC Bluewhale Rig Ltd, while the operational management of the rigs was taken over by Bluewhale Offshore, another subsidiary of CIMC.

The two semi-submersible units ordered by Frigstad Deepwater, Frigstad Shekou and Frigstad Kristiansand, were then renamed Bluewhale I and Bluewhale II.



The Bluewhale I is based on the Frigstad D90 basic design, and equipped with a DP-3 dynamic positioning system and classed by DNV. With an operational depth is up to 3,658 meters and drilling depth to 15,240 meters, Bluewhale I can operate in all global waters.

The rig is 387 feet (118 meters) high and, according to CIMC Raffles, the 42,000-ton vessel uses ten percent less fuel than comparable rigs. It conducted its 25-day sea trials in September last year. The \$700 million-worth rig is the ninth deepwater semi-submersible drilling rig delivered by CIMC Raffles.

According to the latest AIS data, the rig is currently in the Yellow Sea off China. Its sister rig, Bluewhale II, is scheduled for delivery in the third quarter of this year.

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