

HEAVYLIFT / PROJECT REVIEW

No recovery until year-end

Demand still sluggish compared with two to three years ago, claims forwarder

DESPITE the improving global economic outlook and soaring energy demand, heavylift and project forwarding demand has still not returned to the heady days of the late-1990s, according to one leading service provider, **writes Mike King.**

Susanne Oud, European operations director at Bellville Rodair International (BRI), told *Lloyd's Loading List* she did not expect the market to recover fully until at least the end of this year.

"The heavylift/project market is still sluggish compared with two to three years ago, when it was extremely active," she said. "We see the sector starting to wake up towards end 2011 or 2012, which is when we believe we will start to see serious improvement."

Oud said BRI, which operates from offices in more than 20 locations around the world, was seeing strong demand for specialist project services from Far Eastern and Australian markets where investment in LNG projects was generating healthy cargo demand.

"The Middle East is also strong, but not as strong as the Far East and Australia," she added.

Charter and rate costs for specialist heavylift vessels with more than 250-tonnes lifting capacity had not so far spiked, but she said operators of vessels of all sizes were attempting to recoup the rising cost of fuel during contract negotiations.

In May, BRI will open an office in Moscow as part of its ongoing expansion strategy.

K Line takes full ownership of SAL Group

OCEAN carrier K Line is to acquire full ownership of SAL Group, a heavylift vessel operator and manager based in Germany. The Japanese shipping line purchased a 50% stake in SAL in 2007, but has now inked a deal with its joint-venture partners to purchase the remaining shares in a deal expected to be finalised by the end of June.

In the past five months SAL Group has taken delivery of two specialist vessels, each with lifting capacity of 2,000 tonnes, expanding its fleet of

heavylift vessels to 16.

K Line, which said the SAL brand would be retained on completion of the deal, said the vessels were suited to offshore projects in the oil and gas industry and assisting in the installation of foundations for offshore wind parks.

The acquisition is part of K Line's diversification strategy, designed to reduce exposure to the container shipping market.

"Acquiring a 100% share of SAL Group was considered a favorable opportunity for the build-up of heavy lifter business, which by taking advantage of K Line's extensive worldwide network will result in a synergy in line with K Line's corporate policy to increase the ratio of its non-container business sector," explained the company.

"With the current economic rebound, heavylift is considered an essential tool for the development of big projects such as those in the oil and gas industry.

"By further building up in this field, K Line will create a new synergy with [our] offshore support vessel and drill ship business departments."



STEVEDORES at Savannah's Ocean Terminal in Georgia, US, successfully offloaded a gas turbine weighing over 150 tonnes from a Rickmers vessel directly onto a super trailer, as part of an incoming shipment of five heavylift pieces and 50 crates last month.

The M501G turbine was then delivered to Mitsubishi's Pooler facility for use at the Savannah Machinery Works site, where Mitsubishi is considering establishing a global training centre for field service and technical personnel.

John S James provided freight forwarding services while stevedoring was managed by SSA Cooper.

The turbine was previously used for long-term testing for 14 years at the Mitsubishi T-Point facility in Takasago, Japan.

Guy M Turner provided a super trailer to haul the gas turbine.

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