

'We think there are some interesting plays out there for dynamic positioning ships'
Steven Neuendorff, head of Americas, HHL

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HHL transporting coke drums to New Orleans

Company profile:

Hansa Heavy Lift targets subsea

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In the fiercely competitive multipurpose (MPP) vessel sector, Hamburg-based Hansa Heavy Lift (HHL) is taking advantage of offshore opportunities below the water's surface to outmanoeuvre its rivals.

The first of those projects, completed recently in India for Malaysia-based Bumi Armada, involved a 'wet handshake': using a vessel's subsea capability to hand over one part of an underwater job to another vessel. In this case it involved placing a midwater arch into a gravity base on the sea floor.

Another subsea project was just awarded to HHL: the bioWAVE energy project, which will use underwater fans to turn ocean currents into electricity. Within the next month, HHL will load equipment in Vietnam onto its MPP vessel *Freemantle* for the journey to the project site off Australia's south coast.

"It's a pretty big deal, not your

normal project moving equipment from one dock to another," HHL Americas head Steven Neuendorff told *IHS Maritime*. "It's a substantial operation – and very technical."

HHL is positioning itself so that technical jobs such as this become a larger part of the core skill set. The company was carved out of assets and newbuildings from project carrier Beluga Shipping, which was liquidated in 2011.

Since Neuendorff was recruited in June 2014 to head up the company's Americas division in Houston, HHL has added engineering and cargo management capacity to make each regional division self-sufficient.

"This brings us closer to the client," he explained. "We can offer them all the services in real time so they don't have to go overseas. That has been a big advantage for us and something we've really strived to complete this year."

HHL has expanded in the Americas, opening an office in Rio de Janeiro to complement its

Sao Paulo office and nominating a commercial agent in Colombia.

HHL has also bolstered its engineering staff, adding naval architects and oil and gas engineers to allow it to better focus on the more technical aspects of the offshore oil and gas sector, much of which is done by dynamic positioning vessels.

"Those are very expensive ships to operate," said Neuendorff. "With the oil and gas market the way it is, if you can find another solution for energy companies looking to reduce their costs, then using our vessels can be very effective."

The workhorses of Hansa's 20-vessel MPP fleet are its five P21400-class ships. Each has two cranes with the ability to lift 700 tonnes, for a total lift capacity of 1,400 tonnes.

While Hansa's fleet is too small to compete with those of the largest MPP carriers, it is highly specialised, with in-house expertise to support that specialisation, said Neuendorff.

Entering the dynamic

positioning market is another option for HHL as it seeks to operate in an environment rocked by plummeting freight rates.

Neuendorff confirmed that the company is actively pursuing dynamic positioning ships to complement its lift-on/lift-off services.

"We think there are some interesting plays out there for dynamic positioning ships and we're willing to look into and invest in them if the price is right," he said.

Once the oil and gas sector stabilises, Neuendorff is optimistic that vessel operators will begin seeing the overall health of the MPP sector improve.

"We've been in a difficult period for number of years but there's light at the end of tunnel. If we keep newbuildings in check, not go overboard on orders, and keep the world fleet at a manageable level with some scrapping in between, I think it bodes well." ■

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