

MIP succeeds in attracting more direct calls to Mersin

SINCE assuming control of the Turkish port of Mersin following its privatisation in May last year, Mersin International Port — a joint venture between PSA International and Akfen Holdings — has achieved considerable success.

Container throughput soared by 24% to 804,000 teu putting Mersin, the country's third-largest container port, only just behind Izmir and in the process consolidated its position as one of the leading gateway ports for traffic moving to and from southern Turkey.

The improved market position of Mersin, now that it is in private hands, is reflected in the fact that three new container services have started to call at MIP in the past nine months.

These include two weekly Europe-Far East services — CMA CGM's Levant Express and MSC's Tiger operation, which started calling in Mersin last September and October respectively. In addition, the Arkas group's EMES subsidiary introduced a weekly Black Sea service last November.

These new services are expected to boost Mersin's throughput significantly in 2008. Indeed, the port seems certain to handle more than 1m teu this year.

A spokesperson for MIP observed: "We have succeeded in a short period of time in attracting more direct call services to Mersin.

"At the same time we are positioning ourselves as a transshipment hub, through building up strong relationships with our customers."

MIP has facilitated the growth in traffic through a substantial programme of investment.

Three new mobile harbour cranes have been added, effectively providing an additional container berth.

On the landside, more yard space has been paved over and container handling operations have been reorganised.

Looking to the future, MIP plans further initiatives to expand capacity to around 2.5m teu a year.

This will include the purchase of three more mobile cranes, and additional rubber-tired gantry cranes, the refurbishment of existing container handling equipment and upgrading work to the quayside and terminal areas.

In addition, MIP says it plans to carry out dredging work to allow larger vessels to access the port and will build a new rail terminal to facilitate transportation to the hinterland.

Operations at MIP will also be improved with the implementation of a computerised terminal operation system and through the introduction of x-ray scanning facilities.