

Mersin International Port sets throughput records

MERSIN International Port — a joint venture between PSA International and Akfen Holdings — has achieved tremendous success following the Turkish port's privatisation.

Having jumped by 24% to 804,000 teu in 2007, Mersin's container throughput is this year heading for another record. In the first seven months of 2008, Mersin handled more than 494,000 teu — suggesting that a full year figure of close to 850,000 teu is possible. In July alone, MIP handled 80,258 teu which is the highest monthly throughput figure in the history of the port.

The increase in activity in Mersin to a large extent reflects MIP's success in winning new container services, including two 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 has introduced a weekly Black Sea service which has a Mersin call.

Around 94% of container volume handled by MIP in 2007 was import and export movements. However, between January and July this year, the company has handled more transshipment traffic than in the whole of 2007.

According to a spokesman for MIP: "Mersin's inherent centrality coupled with our operational efficiency, cost effectiveness and availability of shipping services are combining to make transshipment possible."

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

Currently the maximum draft of the MIP container terminal is 13 m, but dredging of the berths and turning circle is now under way which will increase this to 13.5 m, allowing post-panamax ships of up to 7,000 teu capacity to berth here.

Since taking over the terminal, MIP has added three mobile cranes, eight reach stackers and an empty container handler. Furthermore, eight RTGs are now on order and will be delivered in 2009.

Further investment will include the creation of additional yard space, the removal of warehouses, improved gate processes and the implementation of a computerised terminal operations systems.

This will involve the use of hand-held and vehicle mounted devices for tracking container movements.

Also planned is a reconfiguration of railway lines to facilitate rail movements of container cargo.

A study by the provincial government is now under way with a view towards constructing a logistics park to support the port's longer term development, while a new regional airport is also to be built in Mersin following an announcement by the government.

Such developments will also help boost trade and logistics in the Mersin region, MIP believes.