



# STREAMLINERS

**T&FME talks to Tim Oltmann founder of RoRo experts Transport Overseas Group on the firm's rapid progress as a logistics enabler for OEMS shipping to the Middle East**

**T**ransport Overseas can look back on a decade of success in the Middle East market which has seen the business establish itself as, first, a cargo broker specialising in RoRo tonnages to the fully-fledged operation it is today. Ever since those early steps of 2012, the links to Europe for the Germany-headquartered firm have remained strong and Transport Overseas is the go-to shipping and logistics supplier for a power list of OEMs – including Iveco, MAN, Sitrak, TrueMax and Schmitz CargoBull – that need to get truck tractor heads and trailers from Europe into the region.

Founder and CEO Tim Oltmann recalls the early importance of securing an exclusive contract in 2014 with Saudi Arabia's national carrier Bahri Line to ship vehicles and

equipment needed to support the Kingdom's huge infrastructure investment from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Poland: "Transport Overseas became one of the leading independent RoRo liner agencies in Northern Europe."

The contract also shored up a determination to establish a physical presence in the Gulf and soon the firm was opening a regional office at the heart of Dubai's DMCC district. The move has consequently enabled it to increase sales activity among its automotive OEM client list. Oltmann adds that they appreciate an approach which brings transparency and efficiency to a process which, in the past, has proven frustrating for many companies supplying the local market.

"We work closely with all of our partners in order to ensure efficiency in loading times and cargo management, and this also helps

**“We work closely with all of our partners in order to ensure efficiency in loading times”**

our customers to achieve better delivery times," explains Oltmann. "We always provide accurate feedback for the shipping lines to know what will suit customers better."

Fair and just pricing is at the core of the business, he adds: "We always work hard to have the best value between pricing and service levels. Customers have their own requirements, and we are flexible enough to accommodate almost any cargo 'point-to-point'. Costs and prices always have to be weighed up against service levels and feedback suggests we provide the very highest satisfaction in the region."

Oltmann describes himself as coming from a "100% RoRo background" having served an apprenticeship with one of the world's largest shipping transporters, Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics. The close to nine

years he spent there presented him with the chance to work in a variety of commercial sales positions across the Middle East and Asia regions. It was the perfect background to form Transport Overseas Group in 2012.

"From the start, we focused on providing worldwide RoRo shipments; combining lines in important hubs in Europe, Middle East, as well as Asia which have become very successful. We can offer full logistic services to customers covering what is needed from Europe to all over the world."

He adds that those logistics services may include trucking, customs clearance, terminal handling, surveys and supervision, ocean freights and deliveries at destinations to end-users. These are all plugged into a carefully plotted shipping network which is crucial in a business where timing is everything.

"We are running our own RoRo vessel space from Europe to Middle East and Asia. We have slot agreements with container lines and dedicated chartering department in case we need to charter break bulk vessels for clients," he tells T&FME, adding that the firm also has the capacity to handle industrial projects.

Oltmann's own role has moved away from the busy work of hitting the phones to coordinate shipping to a more strategic role looking at future development. With Transport Overseas rapidly growing in recent years, he has subsequently turned his attention to maintaining its expansion with an eye on shifting market trends and the changing requirements of the business. The Dubai office has worked tirelessly to help Transport Overseas build its reputation as a rolling-stock shipper in the UAE; helping clients place vehicles and equipment on major projects such as the Dubai Metro and Expo 2020. On the horizon now are new mega projects beyond the UAE and across the region, and Oltmann wants to ensure that his business can bring its experience and expertise to clients working on them.

"Currently the focus is on new infrastructure projects in Egypt, Sudan and KSA," he remarks. "We are enlarging our footprint by working with new clients while also re-exporting from the UAE out to the wider region and Africa."

Expanding on the key Saudi market for a moment, he continues: "The Saudi Vision 2030 programme is on track and will provide increasing business for us in the coming years, especially through our exclusive agreement with Bahri. We are also still very much involved in Saudi's metro projects, and are working on several exciting projects for NEOM as well (the mega development across the north-west of the country)," he says. "Demand for commercial



**OFFERING GLOBAL RO-RO SUPPORT AND SERVICES**  
Combining lines operating out of important hubs in Europe, Middle East and Asia, Transport Overseas offers full logistic services to customers shipping from Europe to all over the world.

vehicles – both new and used – is expected to increase in the next 12 to 18 months and we are well-placed and prepared for that."

It is also ready to handle the challenges faced by automotive and equipment clients experiencing global supply chain and cost disruptions: "Costs have been affected by raw material price increases as per all business sectors and this has led to higher shipping costs globally. Furthermore, the increases in demand have affected prices in areas where there is a lack of capacity available," notes Oltmann. "The disruption in supply faced by the manufacturers has led to bottle necks which are then passed on to the shipping side of the business. Brands are pushing for better delivery times although the

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vehicles still need to be shipped to the Middle East region and, here, there are, again, capacity constraints. We work a lot on streamlining this with our excellent relationships with shipping lines. Better preparation is key to this."

He adds that while the European, and particularly German-based, equipment and commercial vehicle sector has been a crucial component to the Transport Overseas' day-to-day business over the years, "production and delivery delays have made this much more challenging in the last 12 months."

The disruption to global production, however, has opened up new opportunities for the company to explore.

"We have had more focus on sending EU-made products to the USA in the last year, and this has also seen a boost in demand. We have also started used truck and trailer shipping. The demand increased following a shortage of new trucks in the EU, and this will become an expansion area in the future."

The talk of looking towards the future leads Oltmann to suggest that shipping and logistics must embrace a more sustainable approach to keep costs and emissions under control in the years ahead.

"There is no doubt that in the coming years shipping will need to become more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Eventually, the ships coming into service will pollute less and become more efficient, and there is long term optimism that this may lead to favourable effects on pricing."

With the interview coming to an end, he states that Transport Overseas is here to stay in the region as it enters its second decade.

"We foresee growth in our business especially through the Middle East and Asia as the developing parts of the world grow in the coming years." ●



**REGIONAL TRANSPARENCY AND FLEXIBILITY**  
Oltmann, pictured right with Richard Hall – Middle East and Asia Pacific Sales Director, says that the office in Dubai has helped establish the firm as a leading RoRo supplier to the region.