

FSO PALANCA DELIVERED AT SINGAPORE

AHTS BLUSTER has been contracted by Interoil Africa International SA for towage of FSO PALANCA from offshore Angola to Singapore, where the FSO was to undergo repairs, hull cleaning and upgrading with Sembawang Shipyard. Augustea's AHT KAMARINA of 123 tbp joined the convoy during the towage which led around Cape of Good Hope. Heavy marine growth on the hull of the PALANCA and predominant counter currents and bad weather conditions, made it a challenging voyage. Mid October 2012, both tugs delivered the PALANCA safely at Singapore Roads.



Rough days during passage of Cape of Good Hope.

Both tugs had to start with a long mobilization voyage to Angola. After inspection by the marine warranty surveyor of LOC and approval of the tug, BLUSTER proceeded from Mumbai and KAMARINA from Sharjah. The mobilization voyage was extended as a result of the requirement to avoid the piracy invested waters in the Indian Ocean. At Cape Town both tugs made a call to install portable FIFI sets, upgrading both tugs to be compliant with FIFI-1. Meanwhile an extensive towage manual was prepared by ITC and approved by clients, end client SNLPP, and marine warranty surveyors LOC.



KAMARINA reconnecting.

At the Palanca terminal, the tugs assisted with unmooring of the PALANCA and bringing its replacement vessel LUXEMBOURG at the required anchor position, under supervision of Interoil's technical

manager Francisco Beyer and Sonangol's project manager Abdur Rob. Mid July the convoy was ready to sail and left the Palanca terminal with the 307,880 dwt vessel in tow. Due to local restricted availability and

the practical problems to leave and enter Angola waters for a bunker call at Pointe Noire, both tugs were to call at Walvis Bay to lift bunkers to full capacity. Limited quay space at Walvis Bay in combination with the



priority status of calling container vessels resulted in a seven days time span, before both tugs, one by one whilst the other kept the tow going, were able to load their fuel. Also a crew change took place and Captain Arjan Vos took over from Captain Ton Firt. A skeleton crew of the PALANCA was accommodated on both tugs and regular inspections of the tow were conducted by a combined party transferred by MOB boat. Captain Remi and his PALANCA crew kept a close check on tank conditions of the tow whilst the tug crew checked the towage connections.

As from departure from Walvis Bay the local winter conditions were made felt. SSE-ly winds and matching seas forced the towing tugs to reduce their output to keep the tension on the tow wires at acceptable levels. Weather routing was supplied by Meteogroup Offshore, Netherlands. In spite of all precautions, the tow wire of KAMARINA parted in increasing sea and swell conditions. The master and crew of KAMARINA were skillfully able to reconnect on the emergency towing gear within hours and with both tugs connected the PALANCA was kept into the wind and seas. In consultation with Principals and marine warranty surveyors Alan Cundall and Paul Lomas of LOC, it was decided to head for shelter of Algoa Bay to re-establish the towing connection of KAMARINA on its main gear, re-rig a new emergency connection and await improving conditions. Permission from



Captain Arjan Vos.

SAMSA was obtained and on August 9th Algoa Bay was reached.

In the evening of 18th August, weather conditions were improved, additional fuel was loaded by BLUSTER and the towage connections were back to original status and the convoy sailed from Algoa Bay. Crossing the Agulhas current the towing speed dropped, after which the most favorable current conditions were sought by the masters and the speed picked up.

A port call was made at Port Louis, Mauritius, for bunkers, fresh provisions and crew change. Again, the tugs went into port one by one whilst the other tug kept towing the PALANCA.

Fortunately, there was no congestion in this port and both tugs resumed the voyage after only a brief delay. Usually the conditions improve after passing Mauritius, but not this time. For the next fortnight the convoy encountered ESE-ly winds force 7 with 5/6 meters swell. On a rare good day the speed jumped to over 5 knots, indicating what could have been in different conditions. Due to the prolonged voyage, Captain Ton Firt relieved Captain Arjan Vos for the final leg through Malacca Straits which was passed under full piracy alert. With assisting tugs on the stern the busy sea lanes off Singapore were passed and the PALANCA was safely redelivery at a designated



BLUSTER connects up offshore Angola.

anchor position awaiting berthing at Sembawang yard.

During the towage excellent co-operation was met from Augustea's tug masters Captain Luca Rapparini and Captain Antonello Puma and from Managing Director Michele Verde, commercial manager Pasquale Accettulo and operations manager Jean Cocenza.

The contract of Sembawang Shipyard calls for the major repairs and upgrading of the 20-year-old FSO PALANCA. Sembawang Shipyard was awarded this milestone contract by Sonangol Pesquisa e Produção S.A. (SNLPP), on the strength of the shipyard's capabilities and established track record in the highly specialized field of FSO / FPSO modifications, upgrading and repair work. Major work scope includes the renewal of the vessel's cargo piping system and pumps, tank blasting and coating, and cables renewal for the entire electrical system. The existing 30-men accommodation block will be re-designed and rebuilt to accommodate 60 men. The new accommodation block will include a new helicopter deck to meet the vessel's operational requirements.

The vessel is expected to complete the works at Sembawang Shipyard end of March 2013, and upon completion, ITC / Augustea will tow the PALANCA



Second officer Leendert-Jan Staat.



Inspection team back on board BLUSTER.

back to offshore Angola. The towage contract was awarded through Paris based brokers POB and Socomet.

For ITC it was a renewed acquaintance with the PALANCA.

Upon completion in 1991 by Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), two ITC tugs SIMOON and SUHAILI towed the PALANCA, which has a storage capacity of almost 2.2 million barrels, from Japan to Angola. ◀