



SENI: MODERNIZING MEXICO'S NAVAL EXPORTS

Servicios Navales e Industriales uses its more than three decades of experience in the ship repair and ship building industry to put the domestic sector at the forefront of exports of new vessels to Venezuela.

BY ANTONIO VÁZQUEZ

Several decades ago, vessel exports from Mexico were at a standstill. Servicios Navales e Industriales (SENI), a Mexican company based in the port of Mazatlán, Sinaloa, decided to breathe new life into the industry, building four aluminum diving vessels that would end up in Venezuela.

"These aluminum vessels are used to support diving operations in Lake Maracaibo. They are used in shallow water operations. The vessels can transport equipment for diving, and oil well exploration and maintenance," says Mario Uribe Fenollosa, CEO of the corporation.

SENI has quite a history that makes it a great company. It was founded in February 1980 with 100% Mexican

equity. The firm was created when several professionals believed they could contribute their knowledge and technology to Mexico's ship building and ship repair industry.

"Thirty-three years ago, my father, Mario Uribe Preciado, decided to start the business. He had been in the Mexican Navy, worked in several Navy shipyards and at some point decided to go solo, so he founded the company in 1980," recalls Mario Uribe Fenollosa.

Throughout its history, SENI has consolidated a 23,900-square meter shipyard in the Uñas marsh, in Mazatlán, where the firm offers services such as ship and afloat repairs, as well as construction.

Mario Uribe explains that during the company's first 28 years, it focused mainly on repairing a wide range of ships, from shrimp boats to large luxury yachts.

Towards 2008, SENI established strategic alliances with several foreign firms, which led to the construction of two steel ships for Mexico's Ministry of Communications and Transportation (SCT), whose special characteristics had not been manufactured in Mexico for 30 years.

In mid-2013, the Mexican company's luck shifted. "We built four 15-meter ships for Venezuela; this type of ship had not been exported from Mexico for close to 45 years, and they caused quite a stir. The operators and end cus-

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tomers were satisfied," states Mario Uribe.

SENI is currently in development with the construction of a new slipway that will enable it to offer other services like dry dock repairs, readiness and renovations. The firm has the capacity to berth ships up to 1,200 tons and 65 meters long.

"This type of activity stalled in Mexico approximately 30 years ago. But the current administration has turned its attention to it. The

Mexican Presidency, Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex), the SCT and the Ministries of the Navy (SEMAR) and Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) want to relaunch the shipbuilding industry," claims the businessman.

In the meantime, SENI is looking to participate with Pemex in 2013 in the renovation of its tugs that will serve Pemex in the Gulf of Mexico.

The experience with Venezuelan buyers has encouraged

the company to seek other customers in the region. Mario Uribe mentions that they are in touch with potential customers in Colombia and Ecuador. To do so, SENI has leveraged ProMéxico's support.

"ProMéxico has always been by our side. Our alliance with them has been extremely productive; they know us well and are eager to reactivate this economic activity," he concludes. **N**

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