

Jebens saves the day

When heavy plate is used as a guillotine

Shipwrecks need to be salvaged quickly – especially when the vessel sinks in a busy port entrance. The Dutch company Koole Contractors specialises in maritime salvage and the dismantling and removal of industrial installations. For the removal of a shipwrecked container vessel in the entrance of a Lybian harbour the salvage specialist found itself in urgent need of two massive steel plates, each measuring 7,700 mm long, 1,900 mm wide and 150 mm thick. Fortunately, the company Jebens GmbH in Korntal Müchingen – which holds this kind of heavy plate in stock and can cut to specifications at very short notice – proved itself a partner who could be relied on to save the day.

Koole Contractors was founded in 1988 by Paul Koole in Vijfhuizen in the Netherlands. Today the family business he manages ranks in the Benelux countries as one of the leading specialists for demolition operations in the chemical, petrochemical, energy and metal industries. On an international level, the company also plays a leading role when it comes to the salvaging of wrecked ships. With its staff of 120, Koole Contractors' Maritime Division operates all over the world. Daily operations typically call for demanding challenges to be met with innovative solutions involving seriously heavy-duty equipment. Even so, the removal of the wreck of a container ship in the entrance of a Lybian port turned out to be anything but daily routine. Compared to the dimensions of container ships being built nowadays, this wrecked vessel – measuring 140 metres long and 23 metres wide – was merely medium-sized. But the fact that it had sunk in the busy port entrance meant that it needed to be removed as quickly as possible so as not to endanger navigation in this sensitive area. This race against time was under additional pressure due to the unstable political situation in Lybia. And, for good measure, the team also had to deal with adverse water and wind conditions due to bad seasonal weather. Nevertheless, since every single

day in the field incurs high costs for the team and the salvage equipment, maximum productivity has to be ensured – even under such extremely difficult conditions.

A Herculean task for man and technology

In cases of total damage like the container ship off Lybia, the default procedure is, first, to unload the shipwrecked vessel *in situ* and, then, in most cases, to cut the vessel into segments. In this way, the segments of the cut up behemoth can be raised, piece by piece, and transported away. A truly Herculean task – and one that places extremely high demands on the salvage specialists and their equipment. The segmenting is done using a metal plate – as large and as heavy as possible – which is hoisted up by a special crane and then dropped from a great height. Its drop height – in the case of the Lybian harbour onto a water depth of eight metres – and its own weight transform the heavy plate into a highly effective guillotine. The forces involved – along with the depth and salinity of the water – all slowly but steadily take their toll on the substance of the plate. At some point, it reaches the end of its service life and may unexpectedly break. And it was exactly this kind of spontaneous breakage that befell the Koole Contractors team during operations in the port. To be able to continue working, the salvage specialists cut the plate off at the breaking point – with the result that it no longer had the weight required to deliver the necessary cutting force. Because all the company's other heavy plates were already being deployed in parallel projects in Norway, the Netherlands, and in the US Virgin Islands east of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, a substitute needed to be found – urgently.

Immediate availability of material from stock and lead times cut by half

Jebens was in a position to save the day thanks to its facility for high-speed order processing. The flame-cutting specialist offers a special service with extremely short lead times for selected orders of low complexity and limited lot sizes. Jebens can do this thanks to a clearly defined process flow from

order acceptance right through to handover of the goods – and one of Europe's biggest stocks of large-format heavy plates in thicknesses of 150 mm or more. It was on a Thursday afternoon at 2 pm that Jebens received the urgent inquiry from Koole Contractors – for two 18-ton plates, to be flame cut to size including perforations for the suspension of the plates and polishing. Both plates needed to be in the harbour in Malta by the Friday of the following week in order to catch the ship to Libya. The fact that there was a public holiday coming up in several countries made the timeline even tighter. By 3:20 pm of the same day, Koole Contractors had already received an offer from Jebens – with a delivery time of four days. By 4 pm, an order had been placed. The flame-cutting specialist confirmed the order on Friday morning at 8 am, specifying that the plates would be ready for transport in the late afternoon of the coming Monday. Right on time, the freight forwarder collected the finished plates for transportation to Malta.

For Koole Contractors, emergencies like this are quite commonplace, which is why Jebens has been their go-to supplier for such equipment components for over five years now. The salvage specialist appreciates the fact that, in spite of all the hectic rush, the cooperation is always goal-oriented and reliable. In view of the typically prevailing time pressure, dependable confirmations and fastest possible delivery times are absolutely necessary for Koole Contractors, and the high-speed order processing service offered by Jebens fits the bill perfectly. No wonder, then, that Koole Contractors were full of praise in this particular case, too: "Jebens is great. They really walk the walk! That's perfect for us."

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Jebens GmbH

As a leading specialist for heavy flame-cut components, mechanical processing and welded structures with weights of up to 160 tonnes per item, Jebens GmbH regularly sets standards in its locations in Korntal-Münchingen

and Nördlingen. With seven-stage manufacture of products from eight to 1,400 mm, widths up to 5,000 mm and lengths up to 20,000 mm Jebens stands for precision steelwork. As a subsidiary of the most important heavy plate manufacturer worldwide, Dillinger, Jebens has access to technologically pioneering steel know-how at all times. Leading technology, the most modern machines and systems, as well as the largest annealing furnace in Southern Germany, make Jebens the experts for demanding jobs.

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Picture 1: High-speed order for Jebens: two plates – each measuring 7,700 mm long, 1,900 mm wide and 150 mm thick with flame cuts for maritime salvage.



Picture 2: Within two days Jebens had the processed massive steel plates ready for transport.



Picture 3: Immediate availability of material from stock and clearly defined process flows enable Jebens to have extremely short lead times for the plates urgently needed for maritime salvage.



Picture 4: Within a very short time, Jebens supplied two flame-cut plates including perforations for the suspension of the plates and polishing for the salvage specialist Koole Contractors.

Picture 1-4: © Jebens GmbH

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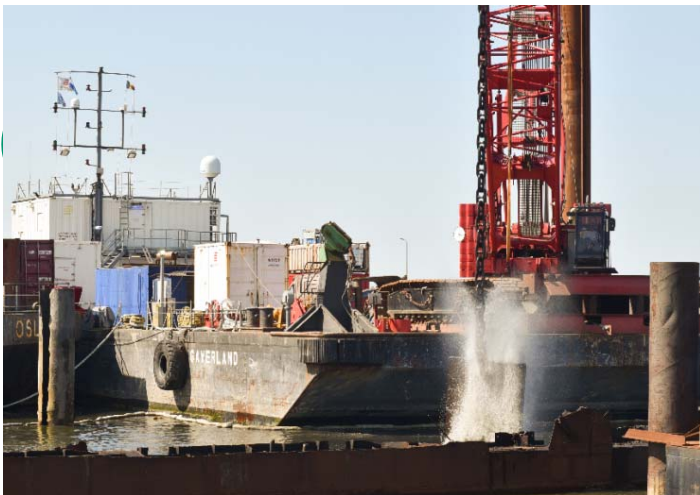
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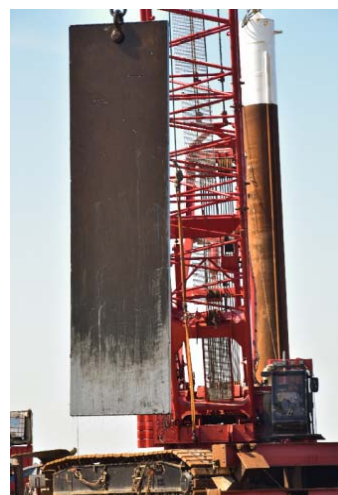
Picture 5: The flame-cutting specialist Jebens processed the plates in the shortest possible time so that they were on site on time.



Picture 6: A prerequisite for Jebens' high-speed orders is one of Europe's biggest stocks of large-format heavy plates in thicknesses of 150 mm or more.



Picture 7: The plate is hoisted up by a special crane and then dropped from a great height – transforming the heavy plate into a highly effective guillotine.



Picture 8: The plate serves as a cutting tool for the segmenting of the shipwrecked vessel.

Picture 5-6: © Jebens GmbH
Picture 7-8: © Watse Roorda

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