
Kilgore company ships pumping units to Congo

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Published: 12/07/2009 - 08:34

KILGORE — A local oilfield equipment manufacturer burned the midnight oil to create the biggest project in the company's history.

S&K Supply, which specializes in pump packages and services, on Thursday shipped five highly specialized seawater pumps to Congo, West Africa.



Ashley M. Slayton/News-Journal Photo

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S&K Supply employees help prepare large pumping equipment Thursday to be shipped to Congo, West Africa.

The company built the 50,000-pound devices in about 10 weeks.

“This is actually unheard of,” S&K General Manager Ernst Vanderlaan said. “Normally, these pumps have a one-year delivery time.”

Italian-based ENI contacted S&K in September, Vanderlaan said. ENI was in “dire need” of five highly engineered seawater pumping units for oil and natural gas exploration and production in Congo. S&K workers initially were excited about expanding operations internationally but soon found themselves facing a challenge — everything had to be completed within three months.

The company hired five additional welders, completed engineering work in three weeks and began cutting steel less than a week after the plans were drawn up. Each unit cost about \$600,000 to build, Vanderlaan said.

Each seawater pump can move up to 4,000 gallons of water per minute. The units push seawater inland and into the ground. The resulting pressure pushes out oil and natural gas.

While the time frame was daunting, Vanderlaan said a good team morale and flexible vendors contributed to the early completion of the project.

“They just did a tremendous job,” Vanderlaan said. “We were able to get them to act in a very flexible way ... so that we could have the basic components built in a very short time period.”

S&K Supply launched in 1989. The company focused on oilfield pumps, services and related equipment. In the late 1990s, it began shipping products internationally.

Oilfield companies and product manufacturers have been affected by the slumping economy, but Vanderlaan said the project has allowed his company some respite.

"Because of this order we really have not seen any decline in turnover from last year."

The project has also benefited local industry, he said. S&K worked with about 20 East Texas based companies to build the pumps.

The units are slated to reach Houston today and Congo at the beginning of January.