

DELIVERING THE FULL PICTURE

Kongsberg Maritime Ltd., Camera Group

Kongsberg Maritime Ltd, headquartered in Aberdeen, Scotland, is the UK arm of the International Kongsberg Group of companies. It has 120 staff, operating from three modern facilities in the UK. The headquarters in Aberdeen handles all sales and customer after-sales support, including on-site/off-site repairs and servicing products.

Aberdeen is also the base for provision of equipment rental and training services for the company's range of vessel dynamic-positioning, underwater acoustics and underwater-imaging products. North of Aberdeen, in Wick, the company operates a dedicated production facility for the manufacture of its range of specialist underwater camera and imaging products. On the south coast of England, in Waterlooville near Portsmouth, a small product-support group provides engineering design, through-life logistics and technical support for the Ministry of Defence and Oceanographic markets based in the South of England.

ROV Camera Systems

One of the two main operating divisions within Kongsberg Maritime Ltd is the Camera Group, comprising eighty staff, many of whom can trace their roots back to the group's origins as Osprey Electronics Ltd, established in the town of Wick in 1975. From its early days as an electronics sub-contract manufacturer, Osprey rapidly established itself in the fledgling North Sea Oil Industry as the leading supplier of rugged and dependable closed-circuit underwater-inspection TV cameras for use in the emerging ROV market. By the mid-80s it was common for the newer, more capable industry work-class ROV to be fitted with a full suite of Osprey cameras covering the requirements of low-light/long-range navigation and detailed colour inspection, as well as many general observation tasks.

North Sea Success

Rapid success in the North Sea sector soon led to business expansion into the Gulf of Mexico and, through a network of international agents, into every country involved in offshore oilfield exploration throughout the world. The rapid growth of Osprey Electronics on the US market led to the acquisition of two rival underwater camera manufacturers, Sub-Sea Systems Inc, and Hydrovision Photosea Inc, and to the establishment of an engineering and manufacturing facility in Southern California. These business acquisitions further broadened the company's range of underwater imaging products and increased its international customer base.

Military and Defence

Not content with dominating the commercial offshore oilfield marketplace for specialised underwater camera products, Osprey began a longstanding relationship with the military and defence markets in both the UK and the USA. In the early 90s Osprey delivered the first fleet-fit underwater TV camera systems for the Royal Navy's nuclear submarine fleet. State-of-the-art, ultra-low-light cameras were developed to assist in submarine navigation under ice. The success of this first major military contract soon led to further work, both for the UK Ministry of Defence and for the US Department of Defence. Osprey further developed its imaging design skills and its ability to design and qualify novel engineering designs to meet the most rigorous of military standards.

Quality Management

Since its early days, Osprey has put a high value on effective quality-management systems, and it became one of the first oilfield equipment suppliers to hold quality-management system certification for both AQAP1 (UK MoD) and BS5750 Part 1 (subsequently ISO9001). Quality management is still an integral part of every aspect of the company's operations at Kongsberg Maritime, from product design through manufacturing, service repair, support, training and equipment rental. All the company's business operations and facilities in the UK are certified under the scope of the latest ISO9001: 2000 quality-management system. The underwater military and defence markets in both the UK and USA continue to be an important business area for the company, and further international growth is targeted.

International Scope

Today, what once was Osprey Electronics Ltd is now firmly part of the Kongsberg Maritime Empire. This international organisation, headquartered in Kongsberg in Norway (just outside the capital, Oslo) is dedicated to the supply of high-performance marine instrumentation systems. With a very broad product portfolio covering vessel power and management systems, vessel dynamic positioning, vessel navigation, underwater acoustic positioning, hydrographic survey, scanning and imaging sonar, position-reference and vessel-identification systems, Kongsberg Maritime operates in every major maritime market throughout the world. For the Kongsberg Maritime camera group based in the UK, the international network of Kongsberg Maritime facilities provides access to key market areas in Europe and the Middle-East, North and South America, the Far-East, China and Australasia. Emerging growth markets in West Africa and the Caspian basin will be the target of further expansion.

Market Applications

From its traditional strength in the offshore ROV market, the Kongsberg Maritime Camera Group has diversified the range of applications for which it designs camera equipment. The group provides high-quality durable TV and imaging systems across a broad range of markets; in fact, almost anywhere there is a requirement for harsh-environment monitoring. Today the main market applications for Kongsberg Maritime imaging products are:

- offshore ROV imaging systems (commercial and military)
- commercial and military diving
- oceanographic, marine biology and scientific research
- underwater trenching and pipe-lay
- drill-support and wellhead TV systems
- nuclear decommissioning
- maritime security and surveillance
- military submarine systems
- underwater trials and evaluation.

Future business development plans focus on expanding the range of harsh-environment applications addressed by the group's products and systems. New areas include TV monitoring systems for land-based industrial-vehicle applications and systems designed for both onshore and offshore renewable-energy projects.

Product Development

Market-led in-house product development has been a highly successful strategy for the group, and recent developments on domestic and consumer TV markets have led the way for new product introductions for traditional underwater ROV inspection operation. The latest Kongsberg OE14-500 Underwater Camera is a high-quality inspection tool providing full Digital HDTV capability (High Definition TV). With an image definition up to five times greater than conventional Standard Definition TV, this new camera is designed to revolutionise the quality and performance of underwater inspection and survey tasks. Other recent product innovations include Video-over-IP, where TV camera images can be controlled and transmitted over conventional computer network systems, providing live video link from camera to anywhere in the world via the internet. Further developments in low-light level and long-range underwater viewing systems are planned. Details of the full range of Kongsberg Maritime imaging products and systems can be found on the group's dedicated website at www.kongsbergmaritime.com

The Full Picture

Kongsberg Maritime's business vision, "We maximise marine performance by providing the full picture", is entirely appropriate for the UK-based Camera Group, and provides a strong business ethos in keeping with traditional Kongsberg company values and commitment.

<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/article/kongsberg-maritime-ltd-camera-group>
