

The heart of Map Ta Put – Thai Tank Terminal

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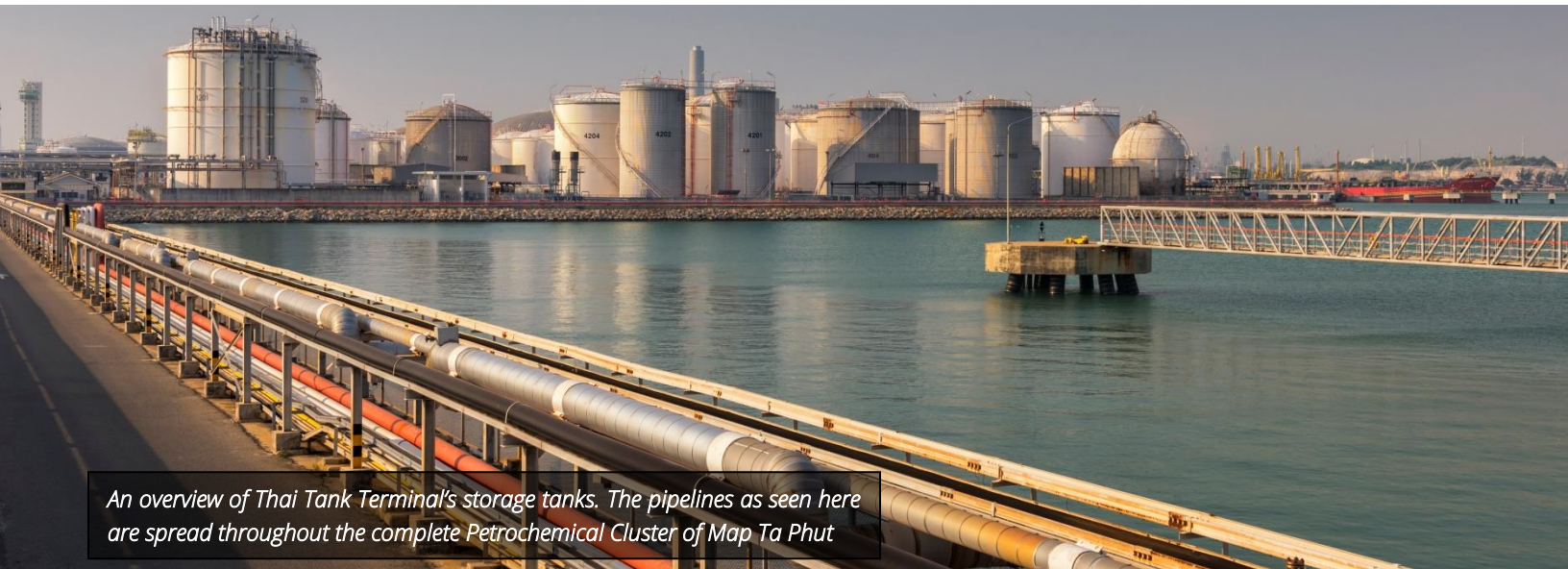
When driving to Thai Tank Terminal (TTT), one drives through the second largest Petrochemical Cluster in Asia: Map Ta Put – a highly integrated and efficient amalgamation of factories interconnected by a vascular system of pipelines. The one taking care of receiving bulk liquid petrochemicals, storing this for its customers, and then distribute the products through these pipelines is this Thailand-based joint venture of PTT Global Chemicals and Vopak. With a storage capacity large enough to store the complete Shanghai aquarium (yes, really), Thai Tank Terminal is one of the largest chemicals tank storage terminals in the world. With Vopak celebrating its 400th anniversary worldwide, Commerce interviews Martijn Schouten to get an insight in the secret of achieving this incredible feat.

INTRODUCTION

It is easy to believe storage tanks are the greatest asset of a tank terminal, but an industrial terminal has more to worry about. It has to handle the product with care while safeguarding the safety of its employees and the environment, which all depends on the safety mindset of the people, quality of safety procedures, your employees' skills, and high maintenance standards. Thai Tank is an independent storage terminal (it provides logistic services and does not own the products stored) and thus it has to earn the trust of its customers to safely handle and maintain the quality of their products. With a throughput of 6 million tons per year stored in 107 tanks delivered through the pipelines *within* and with 25,000 trucks annually *out* of Map Ta Put, Thai Tank Terminal has clearly overcome these challenges. Martijn Schouten met the NTCC at a beach restaurant with TTT tanks rising on the horizon to explain how.

SAFETY FIRST

As we begin discussing the challenges Martijn faces, he clearly mentions that "Only when a safe working environment has been established, you can focus on other things. Everyone simply wants to go home to their loved ones at the end of the day", which makes it clear that safety is the first priority. As a joint venture of two major players in the industry, TTT has strict operational standards to uphold as it follows the newest regulatory developments of both – this ensures high international quality standards for its employees, customers and local communities. Safety through operational excellence is additionally required for product safety, though, as the monetary value of the products stored is of immense size. It is of great importance to prevent spills and vapor emissions to safeguard the customer's product, not to forget environmental pollution. As a logistics service provider, TTT additionally has high regards for environmental safety as emphasized by its recent investments to reduce the tanks' emission by more than half prior to regulatory enforcement.



An overview of Thai Tank Terminal's storage tanks. The pipelines as seen here are spread throughout the complete Petrochemical Cluster of Map Ta Put



Martijn Schouten is the Deputy Manager of Thai Tank Terminal, Map Ta Put, Thailand. He has been working for VOPAK for 15 years already, and is a good representation of the familial working culture. As an expatriate he will only be in Thailand for a few more years, but he leaves his footprint in Thailand as a Director of the NTCC and being actively engaged in the Dutch society of Thailand. A good example is the organization of a swimming course for Dutch children by Olympic Medalist swimmer Marleen Veldhuizen last June.

THE THAI TANK FAMILY

High safety standards are only possible with the right group of people. Thai Tank focuses a lot on its employees – good salaries, openness, room for entrepreneurship, international projects, and many educational opportunities are just a few of their defining traits. This proactive culture results in employees who set up projects to improve large operations and no one prevents them to sell the idea within the global Vopak network, sometimes already in their first year. “This is no HR strategy, it’s the culture. You can advance through your own initiatives and your capability to sell this to others”. In return, the employees create a familial atmosphere with an average employee retention of 15 years! Martijn proudly mentions that “a large number of our current employees were also there during the founding of Thai Tank 25 years ago.” This way the company’s long-term strategies are also conveyed and practiced by its employees. This is what makes Thai Tank Terminal the heart of Map Ta Put in a more figurative way of speaking.

“A large number of our current employees were also there during the founding of Thai Tank 25 years ago”

TRUST AS THE FOUNDATION

This familial culture is radiated outwards, and felt by TTT’s customers. In Map Ta Put, TTT enjoys a large market share in the industrial estate. With a sheltered deep sea port, high international quality standards, and its unique integrated pipeline system, Map Ta Put is highly dependent on the performance of TTT as the pumping heart that keeps the industrial ecosystem alive. This can only be achieved and maintained with its customers’ trust in its safety performance, its operational processes to return the same quantity and quality of the delivered product, and its financial stability to stay and grow together with the companies. It is trust that the merchants put in Vopak in 1616 to store their precious cargos of spices, tea and coffee, and it is trust that the customers (and all other stakeholders) put in Thai Tank Terminal in 2016 to handle their cargos of valuable and hazardous petrochemicals.

Clearly, the tanks are not the (only) stars of Thai Tank Terminal – it is so much more that keeps the strong relationships alive. Nevertheless, the team is challenged day by day to ensure that Thai Tank adds value to its customers’ supply chain and to keep improving its performance. With plenty of energy to do so, possibilities to expand within the current area, the land next to them, and the sea, TTT is ready to go hand-in-hand with Map Ta Put’s growth, and thus the growth of Thailand.

We wish Thai Tank Terminal the best of luck with maintaining their centuries old culture to build on its customers’ trust for the next 400 years.