

# Rugged and on a roll

Based in Germany's town of Paderborn, the heavy-duty transport specialist Universal Transport is on the move around the world – from the deserts of Egypt to Russian plains. For this company, no load is too heavy, no distance too far.



Power on wheels: Via a combined traction-propulsion unit, two MAN TGS 6x4 vehicles carry a transformer to a power station construction site in Egypt.

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**S**iemens is currently tackling the largest job ever undertaken in its 170 years of corporate history: At a desert location just 30 minutes by car from the sprawling metropolis of Cairo, with its 25 million residents, the German industrial company is constructing the largest gas power station in the world. At the same time, two structurally identical plants are being built in the desert at Beni Suef, on the Nile, and at Borollos, on the Mediterranean Sea. Together, the three power giants will generate 14,400 megawatts to supply 45 million people. And as if that were not enough, Siemens plans to erect 12 wind parks in Egypt, which ought to produce another 2,000 megawatts. All these projects shall have a significant impact on the development of the northern African region. With singular weights measured in tonnes, the required parts are transported by a company that has amassed a high level of expertise in more than 60 years of working with heavy loads – using MAN trucks.

Since autumn 2017, six MAN TGS 6x4 heavy-duty trucks have been shuttling over



Experts on location: The new branch in Egypt operates nine MAN traction engines.

the dusty roads between the port of Adabiya and the huge power station construction site near New Cairo. Their load: more than 190 tonnes of power plant components. The vehicle sides carry the logo of a firm with global aspirations: “Universal Transport”. Displayed on the sun visor of the driver’s cab, their slogan reads: “Don’t worry, be heavy!” – aptly voicing the philosophy of keeping cool when tackling massive assignments.

Ahmed El Dahshan, who heads Universal Transport’s Egypt branch, explains: “Here in Egypt, we previously had merely three, or perhaps four, companies capable of handling heavy-goods transport. Yet some of them are

## Reliability has the absolute top priority.”

Frank Rakowski, responsible for the Universal Transport vehicle fleet, on MAN vehicles

still working with equipment that is past its prime. We are the only company to deploy truly modern machinery. With our MAN traction engines and well-trained personnel, we intend to set new standards in the region.”

**CHANGE OF SCENERY.** Some 3,000 kilometres to the north, in eastern Westphalia, sits an industrial park on the outskirts of Paderborn. The corporate head office of the Universal Transport Group is located in an unassuming and functional building. Managing Director Holger Dechant leads the way over the extensive grounds and proudly presents the vehicle fleet of the heavy-load specialist. The 46-year-old explains the company’s business strategy: “We are a globally engaged freight forwarder operating our own fleet. With our latest branch set up in Egypt, we not only seek to handle the Siemens assignments, as we recognize great potential there, especially with regard to wind power. We have a lot of experience in this area, which is why we plan to procure four more MAN traction units for Cairo in the spring of 2018.”

Speaking of wind power: Two massive MAN TGX 41.580 8x4/4 vehicles are parked alongside the main building. They are exclusively configured for the transport of rotor blades. Frank Rakowski, who is responsible for the vehicle fleet, explains their special features: “These machines were delivered just six weeks ago. They are custom-built by the Toni Maurer company, which specialises in the configuration of special vehicles made by MAN. They installed a fourth axle and made adjustments to the steering.” Equipped with 580 hp, the trucks were optimised in terms of



Satisfied: Managing Director Holger Dechant presents his MAN TGX 8x4/4 traction engines configured for the transport of rotor blades.

weight and are notable for having an extremely short wheelbase. According to Rakowski, the rotor blades themselves are not particularly heavy, yet extremely long – more than 70 metres. The trailer therefore exerts massive pressure on the vehicle. “This would simply be impossible to achieve with smaller trucks,” says Rakowski.

**ONE ISSUE REMAINS A HEADACHE,** however, even for this heavy-load expert. Due to the Euro 6 particle filter, the new traction engines are 10 centimetres longer than the previous models. And these few centimetres make a real difference: With a total length of 80 metres, the turning radius is affected so much that the combined unit is unlikely to make it around the corner. “Yet we’ll somehow find solutions for this,” declares managing director Dechant. “We are specialists, after all.”

For a long time, the main arena for wind power shipments was Germany. These days, however, the focus of business has shifted: “Currently, the important regions are Russia, South America and northern Africa. But that does not present a problem for us. As a production resource, trucks offer a great advantage: They can be easily deployed to new operational locations. We don’t have to purchase new machinery, but can just move them around on an international scale, according

# 250 traction engines

are included in the vehicle fleet of Universal Transport, which makes it one of the largest heavy-duty load transport companies in Europe.











Roundabout bottleneck: With a 70-metre-long rotor blade on the trailer, every centimetre matters.

to market needs,” explains the company head. “Whereby it must be said that a great staff is at the core of our business. You can have truly top-notch equipment, yet you are lost without professional drivers.”

## All-round operator from Paderborn

**UNIVERSAL TRANSPORT** offers the right solution for every industry:

-  Construction
-  Wind power
-  Rail
-  Mechanical engineering
-  Aerospace
-  Large vehicles
-  Agriculture
-  Silo industry

**YET JUST HOW DID A COMPANY** from the east Westphalian backwoods manage to evolve into a globally active heavy-load specialist and project freight haulage firm? Growing into a business with about 700 employees that reached a revenue of €185 million in 2017? Dechant points to company history: “Our region is an important centre for the concrete industry. During the reconstruction phase following WWII, the need for prefabricated concrete components was very high. Thus, Universal Transport was founded in 1953. The transport of prefabricated concrete elements actually still remains an important part of our business activities today.” Over the years, the company opened additional locations throughout Germany, specialising in the transport of rail vehicles and transformers. In the late 1990s, Universal Transport ventured into the international arena, expanding first into the Czech Republic, followed by Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine – and finally into Egypt in 2017. With around 250 traction engines and 350 trailers, the Paderborn-based

No easy task: Holger Dechant and Frank Rakowski (right) coordinate operations from Paderborn.

company now operates one of the largest vehicle fleets for heavy-load transport in Europe – with more than half of its trucks being supplied by MAN.

Exactly why Universal Transport would choose to rely on MAN vehicles, is easily explained by Rakowski: “Reliability has the absolute highest priority for us. As a rule, heavy-goods shipments may be conducted on weekday nights, between 10:00 p.m. and 6 a.m. So we have a window of eight hours, and not a minute more.” If a vehicle breaks down, even for just two hours, the company loses 25% of the available time and can no longer adhere to schedule. A conventional tractor-trailer, points out Rakowski, can travel 24 hours per day, “so any downtime is not quite as critical”. In addition, it is out of the question to simply swap a defective vehicle for another when it comes to heavy-load transport, as only the exact same make may be deployed as is specified in the authorised permit. If the axle distance should deviate even minimally, the tractor-trailer may not move from the spot. “Whenever the driver turns the key in the ignition at ten o’clock at night, the machine must start up – without any fuss or quibbles,” insists Dechant.

And their experiences with MAN, he says, have been excellent. When a combined



Train travels by truck: Along with prefabricated concrete components, wind power plants and transformers, the firm also specialises in the transport of rail vehicles.

traction-propulsion unit is moving loads of up to 500 tonnes, the drive trains must truly show what they can do. Striving to reach their destination without a stop, if and when feasible, the convoys will generally cover each stage in a single run, hardly ever braking.

**RAKOWSKI IS A QUALIFIED VEHICLE ENGINEER** and understands the challenges: “When a machine hauls more than 100 tonnes, there’s no freewheeling. Our vehicles are operating up to 60% or 70% in the full load range. The engine, the cooling system and the axles are all subject to extreme strain. That’s why we need trucks that are capable of standing up to the stress for five to seven years.” Universal Transport replaces its vehicles roughly every six years. By then, only very few will have clocked up more than 350,000 kilometres. In contrast, a standard curtain-covered trailer may cover a million kilometres or more. “Our machines must deliver maximum performance,” says Dechant. “And MAN has never disappointed us.”



Highlight of the year 2017: transport of the Czech president's former aircraft, a Tupolev TU-154

 More information about the heavy-load experts is available online at [www.universal-transport.com](http://www.universal-transport.com)

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