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April 23, 2013 - Key International Shipping (KIS), a non-vessel operating common carrier (NVOCC) based in Long Beach, celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. The Federal Maritime Commission identifies an NVOCC as a type of common carrier that does not own the vessels through which it ships cargo.

KIS was founded by Brazilian native and former president and CEO, Juliet Kong, in 1998. Current owner, Hernan Venegas, purchased it in December of 2011. KIS specializes in international logistics transactions, managing the flow of resources in international shipments. The company has six full-time employees.

Vice President Mike Boldt oversees the day-to-day functions of the company. He cites the Port of Long Beach and LAX as crucial to KIS's services. "When it comes to importing and exporting cargo out of Long Beach, it is probably 50 percent of our business," he says. "Air freight is going to move mainly out of the Los Angeles airport." He adds that rail is occasionally utilized to move cargo to the east or gulf coasts.

KIS originally focused on shipping between the U.S. and Brazil but recently expanded into other trade lanes. "Our main focus right now is in importing and exporting goods into Central and South America. We do have a heavy focus on Brazil, but over the past year and a half we've expanded that into Argentina, Chile, Peru and places along those lines," Boldt explains. Approximately 90 percent of KIS's business is based in Central and South America, of which Brazil represents 35 to 45 percent. Not surprisingly, this shift occurred around the time Venegas purchased the company.

Regarding the firm's expansion of service areas outside of Brazil, KIS president and CEO Venegas, explains, "We wanted to be more diverse."

Venegas also serves as president of two other companies. He founded a newspaper distribution firm, Venegas Distribution, in 2001 and in 2009, he acquired the medical distribution company Orange Coast Respiratory Care Services.

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KIS currently has about 80 clients and Boldt estimates 85 percent are businesses. Preferring not to divulge any names, he offers some examples of the types of companies KIS services: a juice concentrate manufacturer, a pesticide manufacturer and “one of my main customers moves textiles to and from Nicaragua.”

KIS also specializes in helping individuals move abroad. Boldt says many of these people are natives of Central and South America who are now choosing to move back. “One of the aspects of our business is we help people who are actually moving back to wherever they came from,” he says, noting that many of these individuals are native Argentinians. “We basically arrange everything and go door-to-door for them,” he says.

Boldt believes this practice sets KIS apart. “There aren’t a lot of companies that actually do that. A lot of freight forwarders will stay away from it just because it’s pretty tedious when it comes down to the paperwork and the obstacles you have to go through,” he says. Explaining why KIS has continued working with individuals in this way, Boldt notes, “As we got bigger, we didn’t want to forget where we came from and how we started out.”

Like any company, KIS has overcome certain obstacles. “One of the main obstacles is making sure we stay on top of everything that is cutting edge, along with all the rules and regulations the U.S. government has in regards to importing and exporting,” Boldt explains.

Boldt reflects upon what factors have made KIS successful over the years. “We really try to educate customers on everything that needs to be done to grow their business, and they can also help grow our business at the same time.”

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He concludes, "Whether you look at our company or you look at a company down the street that does the same thing, the cargo is going to go on the same boats, the same planes, wherever it happens to be going. We deem ourselves apart in regards to the way we treat our customers and establishing those relationships with them."