

Post-Panamax cranes to arrive at Ponce port

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The southern town of Ponce on Thursday will welcome the first cranes to manage containers brought by Post-Panamax vessels, Port of the Americas Executive Director Rhonda Castillo Gammill announced Tuesday.

The port operator will hold a reception ceremony at 10 a.m. to present the two giant cranes to members of the media and the business community. The cranes were acquired at a cost of \$22.7 million, financed with a credit line from the Government Development Bank.

It was expected that the cranes built by Chinese company, ZPM — which operates on a Chang Xing island near the industrial city of Shanghai — would arrive in early February, but it was moved up two weeks.

The ship carrying the cranes left the port of Shanghai on Nov. 29, sailed down the Yangtze River, toward the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa, and then sailed around Brazil until its arrival in Ponce.

Since the transshipment port was conceived under the Rosselló administration, the government has expanded the Ponce Bay draft to 50 feet, the deepest in the Caribbean and the only one in Puerto Rico capable of receiving Post Panamax vessels. Those ships have the capacity to carry 4,000 to 5,000 TEUs or 20-foot containers.

The port was designed under the advisement of Ernst Frankel from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The study presented by Frankel in the Summer 2000 revealed that the development of a transshipment port and industrial zone associated to a free port was economically feasible and attractive to the island.

“This would improve Puerto Rico’s economic growth, reduce unemployment, raise income per capita, would greatly increase direct foreign investment and move Puerto Rico toward a knowledge-based economy geared toward globalization,” Frankel said in his study that suggested the construction of the port in Ponce, as well as development in the port of Guayanilla.

“Such a development for Puerto Rico



Courtesy

The cranes arriving to the port on Thursday were acquired at a cost of \$22.7 million, financed with a credit line from the Government Development Bank.

would be based on comparative advantages such as geographic, educational, institutional and service and allow the economy to add at least 5,000 direct jobs and probably 10,000 to 12,000 indirect jobs over the next five years, all with substantially higher incomes and more output than the current or anticipated in the near future, “said Frankel in his study dated May 20, 2000.

Ten years later, the port — which will receive and send cargo and develop economic benefits for the region — is in the second phase of construction.

The Ponce Port, which has operated since 1911 as a municipal corporation, is being transformed into a transshipment area with 3,400 feet of docks designed for Post-Panamax ships with a capacity to store up to 2.2 million TEUs.

Several weeks ago, one its piers welcomed a cruise ship with more than 1,000 passengers, which Ponce Mayor María “Mayita” Meléndez said could generate a hybrid operation involving tourism and transshipment at the port.