

Arab Steel Magazine

# الصلب العربي

No. 495- 496 May- June 2018

تصدر عن الاتحاد العربي للحديد والصلب



MAGAZINE FIGURE

## RAYED

Abdullah Al-Ajazi

Chief Executive Officer of UNICOIL

( Saudi Arabia )

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الرئيس التنفيذي لشركة يونيكول

( المملكة العربية السعودية )

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## MAGAZINE FIGURE

## Eng. Rayed Abdullh Al-Ajaji

"I say to the steel makers in the Arab world that it is time for revitalization and industrial awakening. The potential of the Arab steel industry is capable of making great strides towards developing productive capacities and shift to Arab self-sufficiency instead of relying on imports"



Arab Steel Magazine Interview with:  
Eng. Rayed Abdullah Al-Ajaji  
Chief Executive Officer  
Universal Metal Coating Company

• **At the first: we would like to know your person , the city where you were born and raised, and how did it affect your life?**

I was born in Al-Khobar in the Eastern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and grew up in Al-Hofuf, a City in Al-Hasa area up to the end of secondary school.

The area of Al-Hasa is known for its abundance of artesian wells, so its people were known in agriculture. This agricultural environment contributed to the creation of a simple society characterized by generosity, tolerance, interdependence and social solidarity as well as the passion and love of families to educate their children.

• **Qualifications and diplomas you have obtained?**

After graduating from high school, I traveled to United States of America and joined University of Miami where I received my bachelor's degree, then a master's degree in industrial engineering and returned to my homeland in 1997.

• **How did you start your career? What positions have you held previously?**

I started my career in 1997 with SABIC where I worked in the planning and analysis department. I was lucky to join a giant company the size of Hadeed, where I was able to gain considerable experience at the hands of experts and specialists of multiple nationalities. In 2000, I decided to move to work in the private sector, I became Sales Manager at Universal Metal Coating Company (UNICOIL), which was a Saudi-Australian partnership at that time. I was fortunate to work with the Company President, Mr. Fahd Al-Thukair, who trained and greatly enriched my managerial experience.

At the beginning of 2005, I joined Al-Rajhi Steel Group as commercial Vice President. It had five factories for rebar, tables and pipes. Then I joined Al-Muhaidib Building Materials Company (Masdar Building Materials Company) at the beginning of 2007 to work as General Manager primarily engaged in the trade and sale of building materials, mainly wood and all types of steel within Saudi Arabia.

In 2013, I returned to UNICOIL as Chief Executive Officer, where I am incumbent. In addition to my work at UNICOIL, I was elected as Chairman of the National Committee for Steel Industry, a committee emanating from the Council of Saudi Chambers working to support the sectors

and facilities of the iron and steel industry in the Kingdom in overcoming obstacles based on a framework of institutional action on transparency and governance.

• **What is your policy or approach that you are keen to follow as CEO of UNICOIL?**

I have been establishing and implementing policies in UNICOIL primarily based on the wisdom and vision of the Company Owners' insight gained through their long industrial history and belief in the importance of preserving the standards and quality of our products and services.

Our focus and approach has also been on the professional, industrial and community responsibility as well as establishing the rules of transparency in dealing with different groups, especially the rights of the end consumer to know about his product.

• **What are the difficulties you faced as CEO, and how did you deal with it?**

The main difficulties faced by UNICOIL are the excessive import of pre-painted galvanized sheet in the Saudi market - the Company's main product. Imports have increased rapidly, sharply and abruptly in recent years, particularly from East Asian countries resulting in a reduction of market share of the Company respectively.

Excessive imports were accompanied by significant technical and environmental violations aggravated by weak regulatory controls on foreign imports.

In order to overcome these difficulties, I decided to choose the difficult path: "enforcing standards and optimizing quality".

To combat the product technical violations, excessive imports and low prices, we have launched a nationwide massive network of

awareness campaigns to consumers, technicians, importers, traders and related governmental offices.

Furthermore, laboratory tests of imported products show the presence of huge amounts of lead in galvanized pre-painted steel which is a major cause of serious health damage. UNICOIL took the social responsibility of informing the consuming public.

- **Manufacturing innovative products with high quality and safe for end consumers and the community as a whole is your slogan since you assumed responsibility at UNICOIL. What approach have you been and are**

**still keen to follow to achieve this slogan?**

We will continue to improve our quality, and develop products with compliant to the highest health and environmental standards and products that will suit various sensitive applications e.g., hospitals facilities, health centers and more.

UNICOIL has introduced many smart innovative products such as galvanized gold, antibacterial, tri-chromium galvanized, environmental friendly and pigmented heat-resistant products and many more. From 2013 to this year, 13 new products have been developed and introduced to the market.



- **What are the most important projects and studies that you participated in the preparation?**

We discovered gaps in the American technical specifications - a globally accepted standard. These gaps are being exploited by some manufacturers and importers in our region, and, UNICOIL has made a strong effort to convince ASTM to

make amendments to the technical specifications for coating of metals, whether galvanized or colored. The amendments were incorporated and announced during 2015 and 2016, where a provision was added specifying the maximum allowable lead in zinc and paint coating of steel surfaces.



UNICOIL has also contributed directly to the development and issuance of a new Saudi standard on zinc-coated or pre-painted steel products which has become mandatory since October 2017.

Recently, UNICOIL has successfully secured protective tariffs on pre-painted steel imports, the first of a kind protection at the GCC level making it an achievement to be noted as a catalyst for the rest of the Saudi and Gulf industries affected by unfair competition. The Company has also shared its experience in the field of preventive measures to many official bodies and national industrial companies.

• **What are the most important awards and certificates you have received during your career?**

UNICOIL has consecutively been awarded as a runner-up in Best Environmental Performance by the Royal Commission in Jubail and Yanbu over the past three years. Lately, UNICOIL has dislodged the long-time first placer and became first place in the Best Environmental Performance for 2017.

UNICOIL is the only Saudi company to receive 9 quality marks and international

accreditation for its laboratories, ISO quality, environment, health and safety and information security management.

• **What is the message addressed by Engineer Rayed Al-Ajaji to steel makers in the Arab world?**

**I say to the steel manufacturers in the Arab world that it is time for revitalization and industrial awakening. The potential of the Arab steel industry is capable of making great strides towards developing productive capacities and shift to Arab self-sufficiency instead of relying on imports.**

But this requires an advance strategy based primarily on protecting Arab industries from dumping and preventing them from over-importing.

The trade war recently launched by America, followed by the European Union then by Turkey in opening safeguards against imports of steel exclusively will not stop there, exporters will re-direct their production surpluses to markets that lack protection applications and they will find their way into our Arab markets.



In the Arab world, we must work together to adopt and activate the preventive measures and laws necessary to protect the Arab national steel industries.

This also requires the development of national Arab specifications in accordance with our requirements and the establishment of strict controls for their application.

• **What are the most important places you visited?**

I visited many countries and cities in the world. I travel with my family on a variety of trips. I am most interested in giving my children an opportunity to learn about the cultures of different societies in the Americas, Europe in its western and eastern part as well as some African and East Asian countries.

• **What are the qualities of the leader and successful manager from your point of view?**

Honestly, this is a philosophical question, but I believe that a successful leader is one who cares about future strategies and vision outside of traditional laws, policies and procedures. He has the ability to convince and motivate those around him to adopt his vision and work on it, so that he can advance the institution and perform its employees to achieve better

results than expected.

• **Everyone has a specific personality, historical or political. Who inspired you in life?**

Frankly speaking, my first inspiration is my father, may God preserve him and grant him health and wellness. I have learned from him clarity and transparency. I have acquired the qualities of leadership, the determination and the hard work and the absolute commitment to principles and values. I also learned from him the love and absolute loyalty of the family.

Since childhood, my father has influenced me the love of meaningful travel and to learn contemporary "Anthropology" in all fields.

• **What hobbies do you do away from work?**

I have a personal hobby of collecting antiques and historical pictures. I have a diverse inventory of rare pictures, tools and folders that I really enjoy being in my acquisition. I also make a lot of reading and keeping myself abreast of the developments in local, regional and international economic trends, the latest applications, studies and research in the science of management and all that is new about the global industry strategies.

• **What did life taught you? If the train of time had come back, would you have gone the same way?**

Life has taught me that impossible things can be achieved, with will and hard work associated with setting of goals and practical plans and a strong determination. Life has taught me that it is volatile and its variables are many. It is important that man doesn't have to change his morals and values in order to keep pace with changes, but he keeps them and changes his activities and strategies instead to meet and overcome challenges.

I also believe that life is not absolute right nor absolute wrong in our decisions, but it is measured to the degree of satisfaction, because we often take it in the light of the

limited data required, while the decisions cannot be postponed because they are related to time.

What distinguishes individuals from each other in this aspect is the extent of their culture, their knowledge and ability to analyze strategically and the courage to make calculated and responsible decisions in a timely manner. I believe that if the train of time takes me back, I will choose the same path that I took. I am very satisfied with my career and personality and I consider this to be a blessing from God in the first place. I will never forget my wife, my partner, who has spared no effort in providing all the support to stand by me in all the stations of my life.



## Universal Metal Coating Company ( UNICOIL )

UNICOIL (Universal Metal Coating Company) was established in 1997 as the first company in the Middle East to manufacture pre-painted steel and aluminum coils, and since then it has emerged as a leader in the steel coil coating and pre-painting industry in regional markets.

UNICOIL was established by two industrial pioneers (namely Zamil Group Holding Company and Rashed Abdul Rahman AlRashed & Sons Group) as a joint venture trading in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with a world leader in the pre-painted steel industry (BHP of Australia). UNICOIL then became a 100% Saudi-owned company in 2004. With manufacturing facilities located in the industrial cities of Al-Jubail and Jeddah, its five production lines now have installed annual production capacities of 400,000 metric tons for HRC pickling, 340,000 metric tons for CRC, 250,000 metric tons for Galvanized Steel Coils, 210,000 metric tons of Pre-Painted Steel Coils, plus 18 million linear meters of Roll Formed Steel Sheets. UNICOIL now occupies a dominant position in the Middle East and North Africa regions.