

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL CLYDE E. ROBBINS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND OFFSHORE ENERGY

COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR

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GOOD MORNING, MR. CHAIRMAN. I AM PLEASED TO MEET WITH YOU AND THE OTHER DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE.

ACCOMPANYING ME TODAY IS COMMANDER STEVE MCCALL, CAPTAIN OF THE PORT VALDEZ, ALASKA.

AS YOU KNOW, THE PRESIDENT DIRECTED THE COMMANDANT OF THE COAST GUARD, ADMIRAL YOST, TO SERVE AS THE FEDERAL COORDINATING DIRECTOR FOR THE EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL CLEANUP. ADMIRAL YOST HAS SPENT SEVERAL DAYS IN ALASKA OVERSEEING THE CLEANUP OPERATION. HE HAS SAID CLEARLY THAT HE IS ENCOURAGED BY THE CONTRIBUTION BEING MADE BY THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR MILITARY FORCES AND THE MYRIAD OF FEDERAL AGENCIES WHO ARE WORKING VIGOROUSLY IN THE CLEANUP EFFORT.

YET, THEIR TASK IS ENORMOUS. THIS SPILL IS ONE OF THE WORST ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CALAMITIES THIS NATION HAS FACED. SEEING THE FOULED SHORELINE AND BEACHES AND THE DEVASTATING EFFECT ON WILDLIFE REMOVES ANY DOUBT OF THE SEVERITY OF THIS SPILL.

LET ME GIVE YOU A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRESS WE'RE MAKING IN THE CLEANUP. WE ARE GETTING EXCELLENT COOPERATION FROM ALL OF THE AGENCIES AND PARTIES INVOLVED IN TRYING TO MINIMIZE THIS SPILL'S POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING EFFECTS. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) HAS MOBILIZED QUICKLY, DEPLOYING 4 MAJOR VESSELS,

OVER 25 AIRCRAFT AND A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER AND VARIETY OF POLLUTION RESPONSE EQUIPMENT, SPARE PARTS, AND PERSONNEL. DOD HAS ALSO SET UP AN OIL SPILL COMPUTER ASSISTED RECOVERY NETWORK TO PROVIDE GRAPHIC DISPLAYS OF GEOGRAPHIC AREAS IMPACTED BY THE SPILL, AND SHOWING THE LOCATIONS OF AFLOAT RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS.

THE COMMANDANT IS SATISFIED WITH THE JOB EXXON HAS BEEN DOING, ALTHOUGH HE REMAINS CONCERNED WITH THE OPTIMISTIC TIMETABLE OF THEIR SHORELINE CLEANUP EXECUTION PLAN. THE PLAN IDENTIFIES OVER 300 MILES OF IMPACTED SHORELINE WHICH MUST BE CLEANED BEFORE THE RELATIVELY MILD SUMMER WEATHER ENDS IN MID-SEPTEMBER. WE ARE INTENSIFYING THE ALREADY SIGNIFICANT FEDERAL EFFORT, AND WE ARE WORKING WITH EXXON TO ENSURE THAT THE NECESSARY RESOURCES ARE BROUGHT TO BEAR TO ACCOMPLISH THE CLEANUP ON SCHEDULE.

WE CANNOT, AT THIS TIME, QUESTION EXXON ON THE SINCERITY OF THEIR COMMITMENT TO CLEAN UP THEIR OWN SPILL. TO DATE THEY HAVE DEPLOYED APPROXIMATELY 70 MILES OF BOOM, 55 SKIMMERS, 460 SUPPORT VESSELS AND OVER 3000 PERSONNEL. NEVERTHELESS, IT APPEARS FROM THE SHORELINE CLEANUP PROGRESS, THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO COMMIT EVEN MORE RESOURCES TO MEET THE FALL COMPLETION DATE.

WE HAVE RECEIVED OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE FROM SEVERAL FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. WE ARE USING CLEANUP EQUIPMENT FROM CANADA, FRANCE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM. AND OF COURSE, YOU HAVE SEEN THE NEWS ACCOUNTS OF THE LARGE SOVIET SKIMMER VESSEL WHICH HAS BEEN OPERATING IN THE GULF OF ALASKA SINCE APRIL 19, 1989.

DURING DAILY CLEANUP OPERATIONS, THE COAST GUARD DEPLOYS 7 MAJOR VESSELS, OVER 20 AIRCRAFT, A VARIETY OF SMALL SUPPORT

VESSELS AND EQUIPMENT, AND OVER 1000 PERSONNEL. WE ALSO HAVE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE IN STAFF SUPPORT JOBS AROUND THE COUNTRY WORKING TO MINIMIZE THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SPILL.

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE ADEQUACY OF THE CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR THE PORT OF VALDEZ. LIKEWISE, THE SPILL HAS RAISED CONCERNS AND DOUBTS AS TO THE ADEQUACY OF SIMILAR PLANS FOR OTHER MAJOR U.S. PORTS. THE CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND WAS DEVELOPED AFTER ENACTMENT OF THE TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE AUTHORIZATION ACT IN 1973. THE STATE OF ALASKA REQUIRED IT AS A CONDITION OF THE FACILITY'S OPERATING PERMIT. NEITHER THE ORIGINAL 1980 PLAN NOR THE REVISED 1987 PLAN (RELATING TO TERMINAL OPERATIONS) REQUIRED APPROVAL BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

THE FOCUS OF THE PLAN WAS THREEFOLD: NOTIFICATION, RECONNAISSANCE, AND SPILL MITIGATION AND CONTROL. IN THE FIRST TWO AREAS THE PLAN WAS ADEQUATE. THE COAST GUARD AND OTHER APPROPRIATE AGENCIES WERE NOTIFIED OF THE SPILL IN A TIMELY MANNER AND AN INITIAL RECONNAISSANCE WAS MADE AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY. BUT IN THE LAST AREA, SPILL MITIGATION AND CONTROL, CLEARLY, THE CONTINGENCY PLAN WAS INADEQUATE TO DEAL WITH THE ENORMITY OF THE EXXON VALDEZ SPILL.

THE CONTAINMENT EFFORTS WERE HAMPERED BY THE RAPIDITY WITH WHICH THE OIL Poured INTO THE WATER, THE REMOTENESS OF THE LOCATION, AND THE FACT THAT IT OCCURRED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. THERE WERE OTHER DEFICIENCIES IN THE PLAN AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE EXXON VALDEZ'S GROUNDING AND THE RELATED MARITIME SAFETY AND OIL SPILL CLEANUP ISSUES ARE STILL

UNDER INVESTIGATION. WE ARE WORKING WITH THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS TO STRENGTHEN OUR LAWS, REGULATIONS AND OPERATING PROCEDURES SO WE CAN MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF A SPILL OF THIS MAGNITUDE FROM EVER HAPPENING AGAIN.

I WILL BE PLEASED TO RESPOND TO YOUR QUESTIONS.