

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20593

STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL HENRY H. BELL, CHIEF,  
OFFICE OF MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY, BEFORE  
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
PANAMA CANAL/OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF  
MAY 5, 1981

GOOD MORNING, MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. I AM REAR ADMIRAL HENRY H. BELL, CHIEF OF THE OFFICE OF MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY OF THE U. S. COAST GUARD. I AM PLEASSED TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TITLES II AND III OF THE OCS LANDS ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1978. MY TESTIMONY THIS MORNING RESPONDS TO YOUR LETTERS OF MARCH 16 AND APRIL 6, 1981. I HAVE WITH ME THIS MORNING, CAPTAIN PETER CRONK, MANAGER OF OUR OCS SAFETY PROJECT, AND CAPTAIN CHARLES CORBETT, CHIEF OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE DIVISION, OFFICE OF MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND SYSTEMS.

FIRST OF ALL, CONCERNING THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE REPORT OF FEBRUARY 1981, THERE WAS NOTHING CRITICAL OF THE COAST GUARD'S INSPECTION PROCESSES AND TIME FRAMES FOR APPROVING NAVIGATION AIDS, PLATFORM SAFETY EQUIPMENT AND CERTIFICATION OF VESSELS. THE ONLY COMMENT ON THE INSPECTION PROGRAM WAS THAT CERTAIN OF OUR OFFICES WERE "INADEQUATELY STAFFED."

CONCERNING REGULATORY ACTIVITY, ALL REGULATORY PROJECTS ARE PRESENTLY BEING RE-EVALUATED IN LINE WITH THE PRESIDENT'S DIRECTIONS. WE ARE IN THE LAST STAGES OF COMPLETING A GENERAL REVISION TO TITLE 33 CFR, SUBCHAPTER N (PART 140-147) WHICH INCLUDES THE CITIZENSHIP MANNING PROVISIONS FOR OCS FACILITIES REQUIRED BY THE AMENDMENTS.

WITH CURRENT RESOURCES WE ARE RESPONDING TO ALL CASUALTIES AND SAFETY COMPLAINTS REQUIRING INVESTIGATION. ALSO, OF THE 2800 FACILITIES ON THE OCS, WE ARE CONCENTRATING OUR INSPECTION EFFORTS ON MANNED PLATFORMS AND MOBILE DRILLING UNITS. WE HAVE REQUESTED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO FULLY IMPLEMENT THE AMENDMENTS AND OUR REQUEST IS

BEING CONSIDERED IN THE BUDGET PROCESS. BECAUSE OF THE ACCELERATED ACTIVITY ON THE OCS IN THE GULF OF MEXICO IN RECENT YEARS, WE REQUESTED FUNDS FOR A NEW MAJOR MARINE SAFETY OFFICE IN MORGAN CITY, LOUISIANA. FUNDS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED FOR INITIAL SURVEY AND DESIGN COSTS OF THE PROJECT.

LOOKING TO LEASE SALE #53, ONE OF THE COAST GUARD'S PRIMARY CONCERNS IS THAT OF THE SAFETY OF VESSELS MOVING TO AND FROM THE PORTS OF THE WEST COAST. THE PORTS AND WATERWAYS SAFETY ACT MANDATES THAT PORT ACCESS STUDIES BE UNDERTAKEN ON ALL COASTAL WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES. THE STUDIES WILL CONTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POSITIONING OF FAIRWAYS AND/OR VESSEL TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEMES WHICH I WILL REFER TO AS A TSS. THE FINAL REPORT ON THE STUDY BEING CONDUCTED ON THE WEST COAST IS EXPECTED SHORTLY. EACH OF THE OIL EXPLORATION BASINS BEING CONSIDERED IN LEASE SALE #53 LIES ACROSS THE TRADITIONAL COASTWISE SHIPPING ROUTES. THE EEL BASIN LIES DIRECTLY ACROSS THE ENTRANCE TO HUMBOLDT BAY. THE SANTA CRUZ BASIN LIES ACROSS THE ESTABLISHED SOUTHERN LEG OF THE SAN FRANCISCO TSS. KEEPING IN MIND THE "PARAMOUNT RIGHT OF NAVIGATION," AS STATED IN THE PORTS AND WATERWAYS SAFETY ACT, THE COAST GUARD INTENDS TO PROVIDE SAFE ACCESS ROUTES FOR VESSELS WITH MINIMUM IMPACT ON MINERAL EXTRACTION. IN SANTA MARIA BASIN, ONE POSSIBILITY IS AN OFF-SHORE TSS WHICH WOULD SKIRT THIS BASIN AND NOT BE A RESTRICTION ON RESOURCE EXPLOITATION. IN THE SANTA CRUZ BASIN OFF SAN FRANCISCO, THE FINAL DECISION MAY WELL AFFECT SOME HIGH INTEREST TRACTS. HIGH INTEREST TRACTS WILL NOT BE AFFECTED IN THE OTHER BASINS IN LEASE SALE #53.

CURRENTLY, THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS DOES NOT ISSUE PERMITS FOR STRUCTURES IN DESIGNATED FAIRWAYS OR TRAFFIC LANES IN APPROVED TSS'S. IN MOST CASES EXPLORATION CAN BE, AND HAS BEEN, PERMITTED BY TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENT OF LANES OR TEMPORARY ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRECAUTIONARY AREA. PERMANENT SURFACE PLATFORMS MIGHT REQUIRE PERMANENT REDESIGNATION OF A TSS. BEAR IN MIND THAT VESSELS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO USE TSS'S OR FAIRWAYS AS ROUTES INTO A PORT. HOWEVER, ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT TRANSITING VESSELS STAY WITHIN DESIGNATED ROUTES WHERE RISK OF COLLISION WITH STRUCTURES AND OTHER VESSELS IS MINIMIZED.

THE COAST GUARD'S PACIFIC POLLUTION RESPONSE STRIKE TEAM PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT ARE HOME BASED AT HAMILTON AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA. THE STRIKE TEAM HAS THE CAPABILITY TO DISPATCH 4 PERSONS WITHIN 2 HOURS AND UP TO 12 WITHIN 6 HOURS OF NOTIFICATION. EQUIPMENT WILL BE READY TO BE DISPATCHED TO THE STAGING AREA WITHIN FOUR HOURS OF NOTIFICATION. ACTUAL DELIVERY TO THE STAGING AREA WOULD OF COURSE BE DEPENDENT UPON WEATHER CONDITIONS, EXACT LOCATION AND AIRCRAFT AVAILABILITY. CONTAINMENT AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS COULD COMMENCE AS SOON AS SUITABLE VEHICLES AND SUPPORT VESSELS CAPABLE OF TRANSPORTING, DEPLOYING AND OPERATING THE RESPONSE EQUIPMENT ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND THE TRANSPORT EXECUTED. THIS PHASE OF THE RESPONSE WILL DEPEND UPON WEATHER, SEA CONDITIONS AND PERSONNEL SAFETY FACTORS.

THE PACIFIC STRIKE TEAM IS EQUIPPED WITH CURRENT STATE OF THE ART EQUIPMENT WHICH IS CAPABLE OF MECHANICAL CONTAINMENT AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS IN 8-10 FOOT SEAS AND 20 KNOT WINDS BUT MAY EXCEED THOSE LIMITS IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. THE COAST GUARD'S SKIMMING BARRIER SYSTEM WAS USED IN THE STATIONERY MODE AT THE IXTOC I OIL SPILL AT THE BAY OF CAMPECHE WELL SITE WHERE A RECOVERY RATE OF APPROXIMATELY 300 GALLONS PER MINUTE WAS OBSERVED.

THE PACIFIC STRIKE TEAM'S PRESENT INVENTORY INCLUDES TWO COMPLETE MECHANICAL RECOVERY SYSTEMS, EIGHT ADDITIONAL SKIMMING BARRIERS, EACH 621 FEET LONG, AND SIX HIGH CAPACITY PUMPING UNITS USED TO OFFLOAD CARGO FROM A STRICKEN VESSEL OR BARGE. THE TOTAL COAST GUARD PROJECTED OFFSHORE CAPABILITY INCLUDES THE ACQUISITION OF 26 MECHANICAL RECOVERY SYSTEMS BY THE FALL OF 1981. THESE SYSTEMS ARE TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED TO BE DISTRIBUTED AMONG THE ATLANTIC, PACIFIC AND GULF STRIKE TEAMS. BASED ON INDUSTRY'S CAPABILITIES IN ADDITION TO OURS, WE FEEL THE RESPONSE POSTURE FOR SPILLS RESULTING FROM OCS ACTIVITIES WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED IN LATE 1981. IT MUST BE KEPT IN MIND HOWEVER, THAT COAST GUARD RESOURCES ARE USED FOR VESSEL, PIPELINE AND OTHER SOURCE MISHAPS AS WELL AS FOR OCS ACTIVITIES. OUR EMPHASIS FOR OCS ACTIVITIES IS TO SEE THAT INDUSTRY ITSELF DEVELOPS THE CAPABILITY TO RESPOND. A TIME OF SIX HOURS FOR INITIATING RECOVERY OPERATIONS ON THE OCS BY INDUSTRY WITH THEIR OWN PRESTAGED EQUIPMENT

IS A REASONABLE TARGET. THAT IS, WHATEVER AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT THAT OCS LEASE OPERATORS HAVE AVAILABLE FOR RESPONDING TO SPILLS SHOULD BE IN OPERATION WITHIN SIX HOURS FROM THE TIME THE SPILL OCCURS, WEATHER PERMITTING.

CONCERNING TITLE III, MY PREVIOUS TESTIMONY AND THE FINAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE REFLECT THE CURRENT COAST GUARD VIEW ON PROBLEMS IN THE LANGUAGE OF TITLE III. OUR FIRST ANNUAL OFFSHORE FUND REPORT DISCUSSED THESE PROBLEMS AND WAS SENT TO THE CONGRESS ON MAY 15, 1980. THE SECOND ANNUAL REPORT, RELEASED MARCH 30, 1981 BY THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, REITERATES THE SAME POINTS. AMONG THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE WERE TO DELETE THE TERM "OPERATOR" AND TO MODIFY THE TERMS "OFFSHORE FACILITY" AND "OWNER." ALTHOUGH THESE ARE NOT CONSIDERED INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS TO TITLE III ADMINISTRATION, THE LACK OF STANDARD DEFINITION WITH CURRENT INDUSTRY USAGE, IS CONFUSING. SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE CORRECTION RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN DRAFTED AND ARE UNDER ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AT THIS TIME.

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON TWO TOPICS RAISED IN YOUR LETTER OF APRIL 6, 1981. THE FIRST CONCERNS POTENTIAL COST INCREASES TO THE CONSUMER RESULTING FROM THE 1978 AMENDMENTS. AS YOU KNOW, TITLE III OF THE ACT IMPOSES A FEE OF UP TO 3 CENTS PER BARREL ON OIL PRODUCED ON THE OCS TO FUND A POLLUTION CONTINGENCY FUND. THIS FEE COSTS INDUSTRY \$9.5 MILLION EACH YEAR. THIS FEE IS ULTIMATELY PASSED ON TO CONSUMERS.

ALSO, THE COAST GUARD IMPOSES DESIGN SAFETY EQUIPMENT AND INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS ON MOBILE OFFSHORE DRILLING UNITS AND PLATFORMS. THESE REQUIREMENTS VARY WITH THE TYPE AND CONDITION OF THE PARTICULAR UNIT INVOLVED. WE CAN ESTIMATE THE COSTS OF OUR REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICULAR UNITS; NO DOUBT THESE COSTS ARE ULTIMATELY PASSED THROUGH TO CONSUMERS.

MY FINAL COMMENT CONCERNS TABLE 16, PAGE 65 OF THE GAO REPORT DATED MARCH 26, 1981. THE ACREAGE DELETIONS BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF DEEP

WATER PORTS, AS SHOWN IN THE TABLE, ARE MORE THAN DOUBLE WHAT THE ACTUAL FIGURES WILL BE. DELETED ACREAGE HAS BEEN MINIMIZED BY CONSTRAINING THE WIDTH OF THE FAIRWAY APPROACHES TO ALLOW SLANT DRILLING FOR OIL AND GAS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THIS CONCLUDES MY STATEMENT. I WILL BE GLAD TO ADDRESS ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU, OR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, MAY HAVE.