

OPENING STATEMENT OF
REAR ADMIRAL DAVID E. CIANCAGLINI
COMMANDER, SEVENTEENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT
JUNEAU ALASKA
BEFORE
THE UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

12 MARCH 1991

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY TO ADDRESS YOU ON THE STATUS OF OIL SPILL PREPAREDNESS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE VESSEL TRAFFIC SYSTEM IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AS A RESULT OF THE ENACTMENT OF THE OIL POLLUTION ACT OF 1990, OPA 90. AS YOU MAY EXPECT, A LOT HAS OCCURRED IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SINCE 24 MARCH 1989.

TO GIVE YOU A FRAME OF REFERENCE, I REPORTED IN JUNE 1989 FOR DUTY AS COMMANDER OF THE SEVENTEENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT, WHICH ENCOMPASSES THE ENTIRE STATE OF ALASKA, AND HAVE IN THAT CAPACITY BEEN INVOLVED IN ALL IMPROVEMENTS THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND OR THE PORT OF VALDEZ SINCE THAT DATE. I WILL DISCUSS THESE IMPROVEMENTS BY DIVIDING THIS PRESENTATION INTO TWO MAJOR AREAS: VESSEL TRAFFIC SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AND OIL SPILL PREPAREDNESS. I AM ACCOMPANIED TODAY BY CAPTAIN WILLIAM HOLT, CHIEF OF THE COAST GUARD'S MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION, AND CAPTAIN JOHN E. McCARTY, PROGRAM MANAGER FOR THE COAST GUARD VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE PROGRAM.

VESSEL TRAFFIC SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE GROUNDING OF THE T/V EXXON VALDEZ ON 24 MARCH 1989, THE COMMANDANT OF THE COAST GUARD ORDERED AN INTERNAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE GROUNDING AS THEY RELATED TO VTS PERFORMANCE AND INVOLVEMENT. ON 2 APRIL 1989, THE COMMANDANT WENT ON TO DIRECT A TEMPORARY INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTER; HE ALSO ORDERED THE TRACKING OF ALL CONTACTS TO THE EXTREME LIMITS OF THE RADAR'S RANGE, RATHER THAN ONLY WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE "ONE WAY ZONE" IN VALDEZ NARROWS. THESE CHANGES, INITIATED PRIOR TO ENACTMENT OF OPA 90, REMAIN IN EFFECT.

IN ADDITION TO THESE PROCEDURAL CHANGES, THE VESSEL TRAFFIC SYSTEM AT PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND WAS FURTHER IMPROVED PRIOR TO THE ENACTMENT OF OPA 90, THROUGH A NUMBER OF EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCE ENHANCEMENTS. THESE INCLUDE:

- INCREASED THE PERSONNEL ALLOWANCE OF VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE (VTS) PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND BY THREE ADDITIONAL CHIEF PETTY OFFICERS. THIS CHANGE ALLOWS THE VTS TO BE MANNED BY A SUPERVISOR AND OPERATOR IN ADDITION TO THE COMMUNICATIONS WATCHSTANDER, 24 HOURS/DAY.

- REPLACED ONE OF THE TWO RADARS LOCATED AT POTATO POINT WITH A RADAR WHICH PROVIDES IMPROVED ALL-WEATHER COVERAGE OF VALDEZ ARM AND THE VALDEZ NARROWS.

- REPLACED AND UPGRADED THE MICROWAVE LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO RADAR SITES AND THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTER (VTC) IN OCTOBER 1990 AT A COST OF \$650,000. THIS IS THE FIRST PHASE OF A MUCH LARGER PROJECT TO REPLACE ALL COMMUNICATIONS RADIOS, MICROWAVE RELAY LINKS AND THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTER CONSOLES WHICH WILL BE COMPLETED THIS SUMMER.

- DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED A FIXED LIGHT STRUCTURE AT BLIGH REEF. THIS PROJECT WAS DESIGNED IN FEBRUARY 90 AND COMPLETED IN SEPTEMBER 90 AT A COST OF \$367,000. ALTHOUGH THIS INITIATIVE WAS LATER FUNDED BY OPA 90, THE COAST GUARD HAD NEARLY COMPLETED THE PROJECT WHEN THE ACT WAS SIGNED.

- AMENDED THE VTS PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND OPERATIONS MANUAL TO REQUIRE INCREASED STANDARDS FOR INITIAL QUALIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION OF ALL WATCHSTANDERS.

- INSTALLED TWO ADDITIONAL AUTOMATIC RECORDING PLOTTERS FOR ALL THREE OF THE VTC RADAR INDICATORS. THESE PLOTTERS ALLOW COMPLETE TRACK RECONSTRUCTION AND A QUALITY CHECK ON RADAR OPERATORS.

- ESTABLISHED WEATHER RESTRICTIONS CLOSING THE PORT TO TANKER TRAFFIC. THESE RESTRICTIONS ALSO HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED AS PART OF A PROPOSED REWRITE OF VTS REGULATIONS.

- ESTABLISHED A PROCEDURE TO CREATE A TEMPORARY "ONE-WAY ZONE" BASED ON ICE CONDITIONS IN THE TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME. THIS PROCEDURE WILL PROHIBIT A DANGEROUS MEETING SITUATION IF SIGNIFICANT ICE BUILDUP IS PRESENT.

AS A RESULT OF OPA 90, THE COAST GUARD WILL SOON CONTRACT FOR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF A "DEPENDENT SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM" FOR SHIPS OPERATING IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND. ONCE INSTALLED, THIS "HANDS-OFF" SYSTEM PERMITS AUTOMATIC TRACKING OF THE VESSEL WITHOUT ACTIVE INTERVENTION BY THE VESSEL'S OPERATORS. THE SYSTEM WILL UTILIZE THE GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS) IN A DIFFERENTIAL MODE TO ESTABLISH A VESSEL'S POSITION. THE SYSTEM RELIES ON A SHORE-BASED RECEIVER THAT OBTAINS ITS POSITIONS FROM GPS SATELLITES. A COMPUTER COMPARES ITS POSITION FROM THE SATELLITE TO ITS KNOWN POSITION, AND CALCULATES A CORRECTION. A RADIO TRANSMITTER THEN BROADCASTS THE CORRECTION TO THE VESSEL SO IT CAN REFINE THE POSITION DETERMINED BY ITS OWN GPS RECEIVER, THUS MAKING IT MORE ACCURATE. AFTER DETERMINING ITS POSITION BY THIS HIGHLY ACCURATE SATELLITE INPUT, THE VESSEL WILL TRANSMIT THIS POSITION, ALONG WITH AN IDENTIFICATION CODE, TO THE VTS, WHERE IT WILL BE DISPLAYED. THE SYSTEM WILL AUTOMATICALLY TRACK THE VESSEL AND SOUND AN ALARM WHENEVER IT ENTERS OR DEPARTS A DESIGNATED AREA, EXCEEDS A PREDETERMINED SPEED, OR ALTERS COURSE

MORE THAN A PRESET LIMIT. THE NAVIGATION SYSTEM TO BE SELECTED WILL OPERATE 24 HOURS A DAY IN ALL WEATHER CONDITIONS AND PROVIDE COMPLETE COVERAGE OF THE SOUND.

DIFFERENTIAL GPS, IN A DEPENDENT SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM AS AN ADJUNCT TO RADAR, WILL PROVIDE A NEAR TERM, COST EFFECTIVE SYSTEM FOR VESSEL MONITORING AND TRACKING IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND. THE COMPLETION DATE IS ESTIMATED TO BE 1 OCTOBER 1992.

ALSO RESULTING FROM OPA 90, A DRAFT OF THE TANKER ESCORT REGULATIONS AND PILOTAGE CHANGE REGULATIONS FOR PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND WAS COMPLETED BY COAST GUARD MARINE SAFETY OFFICE VALDEZ IN OCTOBER 1990. APPROXIMATELY 50 OTHER REGULATION PACKAGES ARE BEING DEVELOPED.

OIL SPILL PREPAREDNESS

SINCE APRIL 1989, ALYESKA PIPELINE SERVICE COMPANY HAS BEEN EXTREMELY ACTIVE IN OBTAINING AND PRE-STAGING OIL POLLUTION PREVENTION AND RESPONSE EQUIPMENT. THESE INCREASES ARE BASED ON THE INITIATIVE OF THE COMPANY OR STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN OPERATING PERMIT. THE ALYESKA OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN HAS BEEN WRITTEN UNDER THE REVIEW OF THE STATE OF ALASKA, THE REGIONAL CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCIL AND THE COAST GUARD. ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE CONTINGENCY PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IS THE NEW PERFORMANCE STANDARD IMPOSED BY OPA 90 AND

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATION. THESE STANDARDS REQUIRE THE OWNER/OPERATOR TO DEVELOP A CONTINGENCY PLAN BASED ON A WORST CASE SCENARIO AND IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF CLEANUP EQUIPMENT; FOR SHIPS, THIS WOULD BE THE COMPLETE DISCHARGE OF THE CONTENTS OF THE VESSEL IN ADVERSE WEATHER. THE STATE OF ALASKA HAS FURTHER DEFINED THAT STANDARD TO SPECIFICALLY REQUIRE THAT THE PLAN BE DEVELOPED TO RECOVER A SPILL FROM THE WORST CASE SCENARIO WITHIN 72 HOURS.

ALYESKA HAS INSTITUTED OTHER MEASURES SUCH AS BOOMING ALL TANKERS AT THE BERTH (REQUIRED BY THE COTP); SCREENING CREW MEMBERS WHO HAVE GONE ASHORE FOR ALCOHOL USE; AND GIVING TANKER CAPTAINS BREATHALYZER TESTS ONE HOUR BEFORE SAILING.

THE LIST OF OIL SPILL RECOVERY EQUIPMENT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE IS VERY LONG, BUT SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ITEMS INCLUDE FOUR ESCORT/RESPONSE VESSELS, ONE SKIMMING VESSEL, ONE LIGHTERING VESSEL, AND THREE LARGE CAPACITY STORAGE BARGES. THE TWO TUGS AND BARGES ARE STATIONED IN MID-PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND, NEAR NAKED ISLAND, WITH SPILL RECOVERY AND LIGHTERING SYSTEMS ABOARD. THESE UNITS ARE MANNED AND READY FOR AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 24 HOURS A DAY. THIS PRE-STAGED EQUIPMENT IS ALL PART OF THE "SHIP ESCORT/RESPONSE VESSEL SYSTEM" (SERVS) WHICH HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO PROVIDE MAXIMUM SAFETY IN VESSEL NAVIGATION AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO AN OIL SPILL IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND. ADDITIONAL

RESPONSE EQUIPMENT IS BEING ACQUIRED AND PLANS ARE IN PROGRESS TO CREATE A RESPONSE STATION IN PORT ETCHES, AT CAPE HINCHINBROOK ENTRANCE, IN ADDITION TO THE STATIONS AT VALDEZ AND NAKED ISLAND.

THE OIL-SKIMMING SHIP VALDEZ STAR HAS BEEN LAUNCHED FOR ALYESKA IN PORTLAND, MAINE AND IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING SEA TRIALS AND COAST GUARD INSPECTION FOR CERTIFICATION. ONCE ACCEPTED, THIS 123-FOOT SHIP WILL TRANSIT UNDER HER OWN POWER VIA THE PANAMA CANAL AND IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN VALDEZ IN EARLY JUNE 1991. THIS SHIP WILL JOIN THE SHIPS AND BARGES PRESENTLY IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND.

ALYESKA HAS STOCKPILED BOOM AND ABSORBENT EQUIPMENT ALL OVER PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AND HAS CONTRACTED WITH A FLEET OF FISHING VESSELS TO DEPLOY BOOM AND PROVIDE HELP WHERE NECESSARY. THESE BOATS ARE SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED AND REGULARLY TRAIN WITH ALYESKA TO BE PREPARED TO RESPOND IF CALLED -- ALL SPECIFIED BY OPA 90.

TODAY, ALL LADEN TANKERS ARE ESCORTED BY AN OCEANGOING TUG AND A 200-FOOT ESCORT TUG/RESPONSE VESSEL, EXTENSIVELY EQUIPPED WITH BOOM, SKIMMERS, WORKBOATS, AND TANKAGE. THIS ESCORT IS FROM THE ALYESKA MARINE TERMINAL IN PORT VALDEZ THROUGH VALDEZ NARROWS, VALDEZ ARM AND ACROSS PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AND THROUGH CAPE HINCHINBROOK ENTRANCE, A DISTANCE OF OVER 60 NAUTICAL MILES. THIS ESCORT OCCURS AT A SPEED OF APPROXIMATELY 10 KNOTS, SLOW ENOUGH TO ENSURE THAT THE ESCORT VESSELS CAN PROVIDE RAPID AND

EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE. THIS ENTIRE SYSTEM IS EXERCISED FREQUENTLY, AND THE TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES ARE CONSTANTLY BEING REVIEWED AND IMPROVED.

ALYESKA MARINE TERMINAL, SERVS, STATE OF ALASKA, COAST GUARD, AND NUMEROUS OTHER STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES CONDUCT -- ON A QUARTERLY BASIS -- OIL SPILL EXERCISES UTILIZING THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS). ALYESKA, THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (ADEC), AND THE COAST GUARD EXERCISE THE UNIFIED COMMAND STRUCTURE AT ALL DRILLS. THE MOST RECENT EXERCISE OCCURRED ON FEBRUARY 22ND WHEN ALYESKA CONDUCTED AN ACTUAL BOOM DEPLOYMENT EXERCISE WITH THE LOCAL FISHING VESSEL FLEET IN RESPONSE TO A SIMULATED 300-BARREL SPILL.

THE PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND REGIONAL CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCIL (RCAC) HAS BEEN EXTREMELY ACTIVE IN WORKING WITH ALYESKA, STATE OF ALASKA, COAST GUARD AND OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES TO IMPROVE THE MARINE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND. THIS GROUP, THOUGH NOT YET FORMALLY RECOGNIZED UNDER OPA 90, MEETS THE INTENT AND PURPOSE AS DESCRIBED AND AUTHORIZED BY THE LAW. THE CITIZENS OF PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND COMMUNITIES MEET REGULARLY AND HAVE A PROCESS TO MAKE THEIR CONCERNS KNOWN AND PROVIDE INPUT INTO THE TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE SERVICE MARINE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND THE OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN.

ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOT FORMALLY REQUESTED RECOGNITION UNDER THE LAW, THE "VALDEZ MARINE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE" IS EFFECTIVELY IN PLACE AND OPERATING. IT IS PRESENTLY COMPRISED OF (1) ALYESKA MARINE TERMINAL, (2) A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND TANKER ASSOCIATION (PWSTA), (3) A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION (ADEC), (4) THE SOUTHWEST PILOTS ASSOCIATION, AND (5) THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE COAST GUARD MARINE SAFETY OFFICE AT VALDEZ. OTHER INTERESTED GROUPS OR AGENCIES, SUCH AS THE RCAC, ARE REGULARLY INVITED AND ATTEND THESE MONTHLY MEETINGS, DEPENDING ON THE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION. THIS COMMITTEE'S MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO IMPROVE SAFETY IN THE MARINE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND BY RECOMMENDING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE OPERATIONS OF SERVS, OVERSIGHT OF SERVS SPILL DRILLS AND EXERCISES, AND OTHER AREAS OF MUTUAL CONCERN.

THAT CONCLUDES MY OPENING STATEMENT. I WILL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.