



PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE TASMAN SPIRIT INCIDENT

Recent press articles quoting the views of Pakistan's Foreign Minister on the shoreline clean-up operation following the TASMAN SPIRIT incident regrettably do not acknowledge the international response effort mobilised by the American P&I Club on behalf of the owner of the vessel.

The facts are that senior members of staff from The International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF) have been on site in Karachi from 10th August until 12th October, assisting the relevant authorities. On the advice of ITOPF the American P&I Club funded the provision of resources and expertise from Oil Spill Response Ltd (OSRL), UK; East Asia Response Ltd (EARL), Singapore; RAW Consulting, Ireland, and Le Floch Depollution, France. Each of these organisations has made their expertise available to the authorities in Karachi and has assisted them in responding to this serious incident. ITOPF staff have regularly met with members of the Crisis Coordination Committee set up by President Musharraf during his visit to Karachi on 25th August.

The equipment and materials airlifted to Karachi by the shipowner and the American Club were selected on ITOPF's advice, following a comprehensive assessment on-site of the nature of the oil pollution threat, the economic and environmental resources at risk, and the national response capability. To prepare for a major release of oil, equipment from OSRL was flown to Karachi before the vessel broke in two on 13th August. Simultaneously, arrangements were made for the EARL C130 aircraft equipped for the aerial application of dispersant to be mobilised from Singapore and for an additional 100 tonnes of dispersant to be flown to Karachi from the UK. In the event the spilled oil was carried directly onto Clifton Beach in heavy surf and response measures initially focussed on dispersing floating oil to prevent it entering sensitive mangrove areas to the east and on removing oil from within Karachi Port.

With the agreement of the several authorities in Karachi, the cleaning of Clifton Beach started in earnest after the remaining cargo had been removed and with it the risk of re-oiling by intermittent releases. Beach cleaning was undertaken by various authorities, following strategies recommended by ITOPF for both clean-up and the disposal of oily waste. At a meeting on 10th October the Crisis Coordination Committee deemed Clifton Beach to be sufficiently clean for re-opening to the public.

The American P&I Club has funded the international response to the incident, including the cleaning of Clifton Beach and the lightering of the remaining cargo by the salvors, Tsavliris. In addition, the Club has settled those claims that have so far been presented by the various Government authorities and agencies involved in the response effort.

Contrary to the assertions of the Foreign Minister, there are no regulations which obliged the owner and American Club to respond pro-actively to the spill in the way that they did. The responsibility for maintaining a capability for dealing with oil pollution incidents lies with the Government under the terms of the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation (OPRC) to which Pakistan is a party. It is matter of regret for all concerned that Pakistan has not ratified the 1992 Civil Liability Convention and 1992 Fund Convention.

Notes on ITOPF:

1. The International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited (ITOPF) was established as a non-profit making service organisation in 1968. For 35 years ITOPF has provided a broad range of technical services in the field of marine pollution to and on behalf of shipowners, their P&I insurers and other groups such as the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund, as well as the community at large.

2. ITOPF's Membership currently comprises some 4,400 owners and bareboat charterers of more than 8,000 tank vessels with a total gross tonnage of about 196 million GT. The organisation also benefits from the participation of some 320 million GT of non-tanker tonnage owned and operated by its Associates.

3. ITOPF's priority service is responding to accidental spills of oil (cargo and bunkers), chemicals and other substances carried in bulk. The organisation's team of highly experienced technical staff are at constant readiness to travel anywhere in the world at a few hours' notice to give objective, non-partisan advice on effective clean-up measures and the mitigation of damage. Since 1978 ITOPF staff have attended on-site at about 500 incidents around the world, giving the organisation unparalleled practical experience of the realities of combating major marine spills. ITOPF also:

- assesses the damage caused by spills to the environment and economic resources;
- provides advice on the technical merits of claims for compensation;
- conducts contingency planning, advisory and training assignments;
- produces a wide range of technical publications; and
- maintains various databases as well as a website at <http://www.itopf.com>.

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