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The U.S. Coast Guard: Capabilities and Challenges

BY CONGRESSMAN ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS (D-MD)
Chairman of the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee

I have had the honor of serving as Chairman of the House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation for one year. During that time, I have come to learn a great deal both about the tremendous accomplishments and capabilities of the Coast Guard - and about the many challenges the service faces.

Similarly, I have learned about many facets of the maritime industry, including the central role that maritime transportation plays in our nation's economy - according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 80 percent of the volume of our foreign trade enters our nation through our ports - as well as the challenges this industry faces.

During the course of 2007, I convened 13 hearings of the Subcommittee. The year's last hearing was a special field hearing convened on November 19, 2007, in San Francisco, California, to consider the circumstances that led to the allision of the M/V COSCO BUSAN with the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge on November 7, 2007.

So many of the issues our Subcommittee has examined during the past year are woven into the story of the allision of the COSCO BUSAN and the spill of some 58,000 gallons of oil resulting from the accident.

Issues raised by the event include the performance of the pilot and the role that the

Coast Guard's vessel traffic service should play in aiding ships' navigation.

They also entail examination of the adequacy of the immediate post-incident investigation - which renews questions about the Coast Guard's ability to fully implement the multiple responsibilities of the marine safety program, itself the subject of a separate hearing in August of last year.

Further, they encompass such questions as whether current oil spill response protocols are adequate as well as whether the kinds of construction standards now imposed on oil tankers should be applied to cargo ships, which continue to increase in size.

Our hearing also examined the significant concerns that surround the Coast Guard's management of the response to the oil spill, including the accuracy of the service's assessment of the spill's size and the adequacy of the notification provided to other authorities participating in the area response plan.

Important information on the allision and oil spill response were provided during the hearing by our witnesses, including the Coast Guard, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as well as the Mayor of San Francisco, California state agencies, and a number of local entities, including Save the Bay, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's



REP. CUMMINGS

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Marine Response Consultants

Soundings

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Subcommittee Chairman Elijah Cummings lead the special COSCO BUSAN field hearing held in San Francisco, CA.

Associations, and the San Francisco Bar Pilots Association.

However, coming just 12 days after the allision and while active clean-up efforts were still on-going, the hearing uncovered important details about the incident but did not necessarily fit all of the pieces together to create a complete timeline of events or to allow a thorough assessment to be made of the adequacy of current maritime operating and incident response protocols.

For example, the Coast Guard witness, Rear Admiral Craig Bone, Commander of the Coast Guard’s Eleventh District, testified that something went terribly wrong on the ship - but no witness could clearly identify specifically what had gone wrong.

For that reason, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and I have asked the Department of Homeland Security’s Inspector General (DHS IG) to launch an investigation of the circumstances surrounding both the COSCO BUSAN accident and the response to the oil spill.

This review is not meant to duplicate the many investigations underway - including the Coast Guard’s own review of its performance, the National Transportation Safety Board’s review of the incident, and any criminal investigations that may be undertaken.

Rather, the DHS IG’s review is meant to be a practical review of the incident to quickly identify the lessons that can be learned from the incident and inform the development of possible new legislation and operating practices needed to apply these lessons to improve the safety of the maritime industry.

As Subcommittee Chairman, I am convinced that simply holding a hearing to discuss a matter is not an adequate step to truly address the matter. Hearings must be followed by vigilant oversight of promised actions and by on-going investigation of continuing developments.

For that reason, when government or industry has promised to take action on matters before the Subcommittee - or when future significant developments have been anticipated - I have scheduled follow-up hearings to assess the progress made on the issues and to hold all parties accountable for fulfilling the promises they have made.


It is in that same spirit of commitment to results that Speaker Pelosi and I have asked for the DHS IG investigation.

In the coming year, our Subcommittee will continue to explore issues that will shed light on the ability of the Coast Guard to balance its traditional missions with its critical homeland security missions.

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We will also explore the issues that are of paramount concern to day-to-day maritime operations, such as the issuance of the TWIC card, the conduct of the Coast Guard's Administrative Law System, and the completion of some 85 pending rulemaking projects awaited by industry (including the long-overdue marine salvage and firefighting regulations).

Additionally, we will continue to look at emerging trends in the industry, such as the development of new maritime education programs to attract people to the industry and to create a meaningful career path for new entrants.

Most importantly, however, we will seek to produce results that will strengthen our Coast Guard and our maritime industry and begin to restore what should be a sense of shared commitment between them to our common national goals. 

President's Message

BY JOHN A. WITTE, JR.
President, American Salvage Association

This is my inaugural President's Message for *Soundings*, and I am most grateful to serve the members and the industry as President of the American Salvage Association (ASA) for the next two years. First and foremost I wish to thank the membership of the ASA who have entrusted me to fulfill this very important role. I am only able to do so as a result of the successful term of my predecessor, George Wittich, who offered sound guidance and insight throughout his service to the ASA, its membership and the Salvage Community as a whole. George, thanks from all of us!

It is a very exciting time for the ASA and the industry, and we have some very important goals to achieve over the next two years and beyond. Among them is to remain in the leadership position on the push toward promulgation of federal marine firefighting and salvage regulations as necessitated by OPA-90. As has been our focus since the creation of ASA, we will continue to

urge the Coast Guard to move forward without further delay on these critically important regulations that will ultimately benefit the marine industry overall and the Nation as a whole.

We will also continue to work closely with the Coast Guard and particularly with RDML Brian Salerno, USCG, on the ASA/USCG Quality Partnership Agreement, signed by both parties last August. This agreement officially underscores ASA's role as a vital partner to the Coast Guard in efforts to prepare for and respond to marine related disasters. This relationship will help to strengthen the communication and working relationship between the Coast Guard and the marine salvage industry to improve vessel and personnel safety within that industry, enhance national maritime security preparedness and response, promote timely, responsible, professional salvage response to marine casualties, and enhance the protection of the environment along our nation's waterways.

The Association will continue to review its budget and fiscal reserves and take action to help ensure even greater security for the Association over the years ahead. We will continue to work hard to improve the relationship between the General and Associate members, an action that we have continued to enhance our meetings.


We will expand upon our role in training and reach out to those regulatory agencies and others who would benefit from this outstanding program. We are the experts in salvage response, so let's share our expertise with those agencies that can surely benefit. This program also provides the ASA instructors the opportunity to interact with those individuals who they may meet or interact with while involved in a response. Overall this ASA initiative provides a benefit to all involved.

Although the membership of the ASA spans North America and beyond, the ASA is also the point where we all come together. The strength of the ASA is its membership, and your thoughts, concerns, support and willingness to contribute are vital. While we all may not always agree, the most important thing is to continue to move forward. In this vein, please feel free to contact me, or Dick Fredricks, at any time, with your suggestions, concerns, contribution of articles to *Soundings*, or just to say hello and keep in touch. And together, we

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JOHN A. WITTE, JR.

will continue to move ahead to a very bright future for the American Salvage Association. 

From the Editor

BY JIM BLADH
Managing Editor - *Soundings*

The National Maritime Salvage Conference, co-sponsored by the American Salvage Association and *Marine Log* held October 9-11 at the Hyatt Regency, Crystal City, exceeded our expectations with the quality of the presentations.




One worth noting here is Ann Hayward Walker's presentation on LNG tankers and terminals, which noted that LNG is not characterized by experts as a material that explodes or detonates. Vapor cloud explosions are possible, yet considered not probable.

Captain Richard Hooper's luncheon presentation detailed the threat and argument for developing a National Maritime Salvage Policy. The events of September 11, 2001, along with the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, demonstrated that the threat to our maritime sector is both man-made and natural. Captain Hooper explained that the actions of well-coordinated enemy attacks on shipping could have a significant financial impact. The fact that a ship collision and/or sinking and subsequent salvage operation could severely disrupt the flow of trade through any major U.S. port made clear the need for a prescribed response plan that involves the resources of federal, state and local government along with the tremendous capacity of private salvors. Although the discussion of actions was primarily government-centric, it engaged the salvage community to consider how it might coordinate its resources in response to a national salvage emergency.

Congressman Elijah E. Cummings, Chairman of the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, was awarded the ASA Rapid Response Award (*see page 5*). Congressman Cummings said in part that, "I will continue my work to ensure that the Coast Guard

and maritime industry have the system and resources in place to fully thrive and flourish."

Finally, the American Salvage Association publicly recognized Commander Robert K. (Bull) Thurman, USN (ret.). Bob is one of the last of the old time salvage masters. There has been considerable documentation on his achievements dating back to the days of Commodore Sullivan. While in North Africa on the *USS Brant*, Bob on occasion had breakfast with General Patton and Commodore Sullivan. After World War II, Bob retired and worked for Merritt Chapman and Scott, later to become Murphy Pacific. He now resides in Arizona. Congratulations, Commander! 

Jim Bladh


ASA Elects New Leaders for 2007-2009

John A. Witte, Jr., Executive Vice President of Donjon Marine Co., Inc. (Hillside, NJ) has been elected President of the American Salvage Association (ASA). **Mauricio Garrido**, Managing Director of Salvage for the Americas for Titan, a Crowley Company, (Fort Lauderdale, FL) has been elected ASA's Vice President, and **Tim Beaver**, President of Global Diving & Salvage, Inc. (Seattle, WA) has been elected Secretary/Treasurer.

In addition, James Calhoun, Senior Vice President, Bisso Marine Co., Inc. (Houston, TX); Paul Hankins, Vice President for Operations, Donjon-SMIT, LLC (Alexandria, VA); Charles Usher, President, Marine Pollution Control (Detroit, MI); and Ken Edgar, Marine Response Consultant (Houston, TX) were elected to ASA's Executive Committee.

"We look forward to great things from the slate of incoming leaders to ASA," said John Witte, Jr. "Among the areas the ASA will focus on throughout this year and beyond are the status of the still pending U.S. maritime salvage regulations, the Quality Partnership agreement between ASA and the U.S. Coast Guard, responder immunity, and the salvors' role in environmental protection and maritime security," Witte said.

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“ASA owes tremendous thanks to George Wittich, Vice President/General Manager, American Marine Corporation, who led the association as its President since 2005. George’s critical guidance and hard work served ASA and the industry well,” Witte said. 

ASA Presents Rapid Response Reward

ASA awarded its Rapid Response Award on October 9, 2007 to United States Congressman Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD), Chairman of the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee.

The award was presented to Congressman Cummings in Arlington, Virginia during the National Maritime Salvage Conference for the “substantial contribution that he has made to the United States Coast Guard and the maritime industry through his chairmanship of the [Subcommittee].” The award also recognized Congressman Cummings’ “leadership, bold initiative and unwavering commitment ... that have made the Coast Guard and the maritime industry stronger, safer and more environmentally sound today and for many years to come.”


“It is truly an honor to serve as the Chairman of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, and I am equally honored to receive this award,” Congressman Cummings said.

As Chairman of the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, Congressman Cummings oversees the implementation of the Coast Guard’s \$8 billion fiscal year 2007 budget, including the more than \$1.1 billion appropriated to fund the rehabilitation and modernization of the Coast Guard’s fleet through the Deepwater procurement program.

Congressman Cummings has made it a priority to ensure that the Coast Guard can balance its critical homeland security missions with its other crucial missions, including interdicting drugs before they reach America’s shores and conducting search and rescue missions.

In his role as Subcommittee Chairman, Congressman Cummings has held hearings related to a broad range of issues of concern to the Coast Guard and the maritime industry, including the Coast Guard administrative law system, Coast Guard FY 2008 budget, the Coast Guard’s marine safety program, cruise ship safety, the Deepwater program, fishing vessel safety, proposed on-shore LNG terminal placements, the roll-out of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential, and short-sea shipping. He has also addressed the issue of aquatic non-indigenous species (ANS) and the need for ballast water management and treatment regulations.

Additionally, Congressman Cummings has resurrected the Baltimore Maritime Academy and set it on a course to become the model for the rest of the nation’s port school systems to follow.

“We are delighted to have this opportunity to recognize Congressman Cummings’ many accomplishments on behalf of the Coast Guard and the maritime industry. His willingness to address issues, meet with stakeholders, deal with problems and work toward solutions has been remarkable,” said ASA President George Wittich, who presented the award. 



Former ASA President George Wittich presents the ASA Rapid Response Award to Rep. Elijah Cummings at ASA’s Fall meeting and National Maritime Salvage Conference in October.

National Maritime Salvage Conference Draws Together ASA Members, Industry, and the Media



TOP LEFT: John A. Witte, Jr., current ASA President (left), congratulates outgoing ASA President George Wittich at the National Maritime Salvage Conference. Ann Hayward Walker, Scientific and Environmental Associates, is in the foreground.

BOTTOM LEFT: Dick Fredricks, ASA Director (far left), enjoys a chance to chat with newly-elected ASA Secretary/Treasurer Tim Beaver, Global Diving; LCDR Rob Smith, U.S. Coast Guard; and Dick Fairbanks, past ASA President.

TOP RIGHT: ASA members Henk Akse, Switzer Salvage; Jim Shirley (center), Holland and Knight; and Mauricio Garrido, Titan, a Crowley Company, gather during the reception at the National Maritime Salvage Conference.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Then-ASA President George Wittich talks with Hans van Rooij, President of the International Salvage Union, before Rooij's keynote luncheon speech.

Meet the ASA Membership

For membership information, please contact Brad Rosello, Chairman, ASA Membership Committee via email at bradleyengineering@yahoo.com, or Dick Fredricks, ASA Director, via email at rfredricks@vesselalliance.com.

Associate Corporate Members



ABS Marine Casualty Response, Inc.
Houston, TX USA
Tel: (281) 877-6236
www.eagle.org



Marine Hazard Response
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Frank Mohn Houston, Inc.

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Mark T. "Reef" Perkins
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Salvage Engineers

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Harold Smith
Miller's Towing

Rik van Hemmen
Martin, Ottaway, van Hemmen
& Dolan

William Walker
Independent consultant

Ann Hayward Walker
Scientific and Environmental
Associates

RADM Joel D. Sipes,
USCG (Ret.)

VADM James C. Card,
USCG (Ret.)

RADM Robert C. North,
U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)

RADM Paul J. Pluta,
USCG (Ret.)

RADM Thomas Gilmour,
USCG (Ret.)

CAPT W.F. "Bill" Searle,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT Eugene B. Mitchell,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT J. Huntly Boyd,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT Robert B. Moss,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT William N. Klorig,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT Colin M. Jones,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT Charles S. Maclin,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT Richard P. Fiske,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT R.S. "Chip" McCord

CAPT "Bert" Marsh,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT Jim Wilkins,
USN (Ret.)

CAPT Richard Hooper, USN

UPCOMING EVENTS



January 28-29

Maritime & Port Security 2008
Arlington, VA
www.marinelog.com

January 28-31

Underwater Intervention 2008
New Orleans, LA
www.underwaterintervention.com

March 17

ASA 2008 Spring Meeting
Stamford, CT
www.americansalvage.org

March 17-19

SHIPPING 2008
Stamford, CT
www.shipping2008.com

April 30-May 1

2nd Green Shipping
Miami, FL
shtang@aci.us.net

May 13-14

Tugs & Barges 2008
Stamford, CT
www.marinelog.com

May 19-23

ITS 2008
Singapore
www.tugandsalvage.com

September 16-17


Global Greenship 2008
Washington, DC
www.marinelog.com



Marine Response Consultants

Spotlight on Marine Response Consultants

For over 30-years Marine Response Consultants, Inc. (MRC) has provided engineering, operational support, and specialty equipment to all facets of the maritime industries. Their predominant operational business lines have been in the areas of marine salvage, mooring, and heavy lift operations. MRC's operating personnel represent hands-on experience and are skilled in all aspects of marine undertakings in worldwide ocean engineering projects including salvage and salvage engineering, harbor and deep water diving, ROV management, complex moorings, hazardous material abatement, and marine fire extinguishment.

MRC staff are skilled in the other engineering and operational disciplines that make for practical, well-rounded solutions to complex problems both in and on the water. In order to support their engineers and operators, they have acquired and are intimately familiar with some of the most powerful calculative tools available. MRC's engineering business lines include naval architecture, salvage engineering, ocean engineering, forensic engineering, and specialty equipment design and fabrication. Operationally, MRC provides clients with the most capable and experienced Salvage Masters, Salvage Engineers and Salvage Technicians available. 

Meet the ASA Membership

For membership information, please contact Brad Rosello, Chairman, ASA Membership Committee via email at bradleyengineering@yahoo.com, or Dick Fredricks, ASA Director, via email at rfredricks@vesselalliance.com.

General Members



American Marine Corporation
Honolulu, HI USA
Tel: (808) 545-5190 (24 Hours)
www.amsghq.com



Magone Marine
Dutch Harbor, AK USA
Tel: (907) 581-1400 (24 Hours)
www.magonemarine.com



SMIT Salvage Americas Inc.
Houston, TX USA
Tel: (281) 372-3500 (24 Hours)
www.smit.com



Bisso Marine Company, Inc.
New Orleans, LA USA
Tel: (504) 866-6341 (24 Hours)
www.bissomarine.com



Marine Pollution Control
Detroit, MI USA
Tel: (313) 849-2333 (24 Hours)
www.marinepollutioncontrol.com



SVITZER Salvage
Miami, FL USA
Tel: (305) 322-8891 (24 Hours)
www.svitzerwijsmuller.com



Donjon Marine Co., Inc.
Hillside, NJ USA
Tel: (908) 964-8812 (24 Hours)
www.donjon.com



Ocean Group Inc.
Quebec, CANADA
Tel: (418) 694-1414 (24 Hours)
www.groupeocean.com



T&T Marine Salvage, Inc.
Galveston, TX USA
Tel: (409) 744-1222 (24 Hours)
www.tandtmarine.com



Foss Maritime Company
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Tel: (206) 281-3800 (24 Hours)
www.foss.com



Parker Diving Service
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Tel: (800) 464-3010 (24 Hours)
www.parkerdiving.com



Titan, a Crowley Company
Fort Lauderdale, FL USA
Tel: (954) 929-5200 (24 Hours)
www.titansalvage.com



Global Diving & Salvage, Inc.
Seattle, WA 98106
Tel: (206) 623-0621 (24 Hours)
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