

BY JOHN A. WITTE JR., PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SALVAGE ASSOCIATION

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Recently, I attended the annual International Salvage Union's (ISU) Associates Day in London, England as a delegate. As is the case for conferences of this type, the first order of business is the perfunctory meet and greet, complete with typically bad coffee and even worse-tasting cookies. As I made the rounds, I began to realize that while it was an international event, at times, it felt like an extended version of our American Salvage Association (ASA) conferences and meetings.

In fact, ASA member companies comprise 15% of the ISU membership (roughly 8 out of approximately 54 companies). From these eight organizations, most, if not all (50% of the ASA General Membership) salvors have successfully completed salvage and/or wreck removal projects outside of U.S. waters. Of the remaining eight ASA members who are not members of the ISU, five have provided salvage support services to other ISU member companies.

tions, in short, the number of casualties has decreased over the last 10 years. This is not an opinion, but a quantifiable fact. As I have discussed in past columns, successful salvors are not people who choose to enter the business on a whim in hopes of a quick profit. Salvage requires hard work, dedication, skill and little bit of luck.

As the number of casualties close to home continues to diminish, North American-based salvors must look abroad for other opportunities, hence the U.S. expansion into international waters. This is certainly not to suggest that non-U.S. based salvors have lost their market. Most foreign salvage and wreck removal is still performed by foreign salvors, typically based upon a salvor's geographic proximity to the casualty. This will never change.

In salvage, speed in responding to a casualty remains a priority. Therefore, if a salvor is qualified and close by, the work should fall to the "local." In cases involving wreck removal; where the situation is static and time is not the primary driver, non-local salvors have as equal a chance as the local contractor to secure the salvage project.

What, if any, are the ramifications to the U.S. marine community and our nation as a whole if salvors are working abroad? Will the lack of opportunity here in the U.S. result in a loss of home grown capability? Has legislation like OPA-90

weakened the ability of our nation to protect our waterways?

The answer is no. While the line of work has drawn a significant portion of the ASA membership to work outside traditional U.S. waterways, we can almost consider the work abroad as continuing opportunities for personnel training, economic growth and expansion of capabilities which will be used to support the needs of the U.S. marine community now and in the future. While a significant portion of the ASA membership has branched out into foreign markets, we remain committed to the U.S./North American market.

In recent months, in addition to the implementation of the modifications to OPA-90, the ASA has been engaged with the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA and affiliated federal and state organizations to assist in the legislation and management of marine salvage related activities and initiatives. As we have said in the past, only through participation in the process, can we hope to be a positive influence. And while it is always nice to visit foreign lands, there is no place like home.

We of the ASA remain dedicated to the needs of our local waters, as well as our federal, state and local government. We look forward to the continuing challenges wherever they may be. **ML**



www.americansalvage.org

U.S.-BASED SALVORS GO INTERNATIONAL

OPA-90 has had a significant impact on the marine salvage industry in the United States. As a consequence of the liabilities to vessel owner/operators resulting from the implementation of OPA-90 and the subsequent modifica-

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