

Message Text

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E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: SENV, CA

SUBJECT: PACIFIC NORTHWEST VTS FACT SHEET

1. A REVISED VERSION OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST VTS FACT SHEET, PREVIOUSLY SENT TO THE EMBASSY AS STATE 166469, FOLLOWS. THE EMBASSY'S COMMENTS AND REVISIONS WOULD BE APPRECIATED BUT TO BE OF AMAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS THESE SHOULD BE RECEIVED IN EUR/CAN, EITHER BY PHONE OR BY CABLE, PRIOR COB THURSDAY, AUGUST 4. WE PLAN TO RELEASE THE FACT SHEET, EITHER AS BACKGROUND OR ON AN IF ASKED BASIS, ON AUGUST 5, THE ANTICIPATED ARRIVAL DATE OF THE FIRST TANKER CARRYING TAPS OIL INTO PUGET SOUND. TEXT HAS BEEN DIS-CONFIDENTIAL

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CUSSED WITH BUT NEED NOT BE CLEARED BY GOC WHICH IS PREPARING ITS OWN DOCUMENT ALONG SIMILAR LINES. WE WILL SEND THE FINAL VERSION TO CONGEN VANCOUVER AND APPROPRIATE USCG OFFICES FOR THEIR POSSIBLE USE.

2. BEGIN TEXT: THE U.S. AND CANADA HAVE BEEN WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER ON MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT TANKER TRAFFIC

BRINGING OIL TO THE PUGET SOUND AREA OPERATES WITH MINIMUM RISK TO THE ENVIRONMENT. A NUMBER OF MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO PROVIDE FOR SAFE VESSEL NAVIGATION AND EFFECTIVE HANDLING OF POTENTIAL POLLUTION PROBLEMS.

3. WHEN ALASKAN OIL STARTS TO MOVE SOUTHWARD, 2.8 TAPS TANKERS ON THE AVERAGE ARE EXPECTED TO TRANSIT THE PUGET SOUND AREA PER WEEK. THIS TAPS TRAFFIC WILL INCREASE ONLY SLIGHTLY THE AVERAGE OF 30.8 TANKER TRANSITS PER WEEK IN THE AREA DURING THE SIX MONTHS ENDING LAST APRIL. A PORTION OF THE INCREASED QUANTITY OF OIL SHIPPED BY TANKER WILL REPLACE OIL PREVIOUSLY DELIVERED BY PIPELINE FROM CANADA. THIS LEVEL OF TANKER TRANSITS IS NOT EXPECTED TO INCREASE FOR SOME TIME, UNLESS AND UNTIL DECISIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO MOVE CRUDE OIL THROUGH THIS INLAND AREA RATHER THAN VIA OTHER ROUTES, AND THE REQUIRED FACILITIES ARE COMPLETED. NO SUCH MOVES ARE ANTICIPATED IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

4. ALL TAPS TANKERS WILL BE U.S. FLAG VESSELS WITH EXPERIENCED U.S. CREWS. THEY ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE MODERN EQUIPMENT INCLUDING A RUDDER-ANGLE INDICATOR, GYRO COMPASS, FATHOMETER AND LORAN-C NAVIGATION DEVICES, TOGETHER WITH EFFECTIVE BACK-UP SYSTEMS. ADDITIONALLY, THESE VESSELS WILL BE REQUIRED TO COMPLY WITH NEW REGULATIONS PROPOSED AS A RESULT OF RECENT PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVES. THE CONFIDENTIAL

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NEW REGULATIONS, WHEN FINAL, WILL REQUIRE IMPROVED EMERGENCY STEERING STANDARDS, INERT GAS SYSTEMS, SEGREGATED BALLAST AND DOUBLE BOTTOMS ON ALL OIL TANKERS OF 20,000 DWT OR MORE WHICH ENTER THE NAVIGABLE WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES TO ENGAGE IN TRADE. ALL VESSELS OF 10,000 GROSS TONS OR MORE WILL BE REQUIRED TO HAVE A SECOND RADAR SYSTEM AND COLLISION AVOIDANCE EQUIPMENT. THESE REQUIREMENTS INSURE THAT TAPS VESSELS WILL HAVE FULLY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, NAVIGATION AND COLLISION AVOIDANCE CAPABILITIES IN OPERATION AT ALL TIMES DURING TRANSIT OF THESE WATERS.

5. A JOINT CANADA-U.S. MARINE POLLUTION CONTINGENCY PLAN SIGNED IN 1974 PROVIDES FOR CLOSE, COOPERATIVE ACTION TO COMBAT POSSIBLE SPILLS. THE TWO COUNTRIES IN 1975 ESTABLISHED A TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME UNDER WHICH ONE-WAY TRAFFIC LANES SEPARATE INBOUND AND OUTBOUND VESSELS IN THE AREA. SINCE THEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE CONTINUED WORKING TOGETHER ON ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO INCREASE THE SAFETY OF TANKER TRAFFIC IN THE AREA. VESSELS MOVING TO AND FROM ALASKA WILL ENTER AND EXIT THE AREA VIA THE TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME AND BE SUBJECT TO CLOSE MONITOR-

ING BY U.S. AND CANADIAN AUTHORITIES AT ALL TIMES WHILE IN THE SYSTEM. WHILE APPROACHING THE STRAIT OF JUAN DE FUCA TAPS VESSELS FOLLOW A COURSE FROM 90 TO A MINIMUM OF 30 MILES OFF SHORE BEFORE TURNING INTO THE STRAIT AND DO NOT POSE A SIGNIFICANT POLLUTION HAZARD TO THE COASTLINE.

6. LORAN-C SERVICE FOR THE WEST COAST OF CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES WILL BE FULLY OPERATIONAL IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE NEW U.S. WEST COAST LORAN-C CHAIN WAS DECLARED OPERATIONAL FOR NAVIGATIONAL USE ON APRIL 26, 1977, WHILE NEW GULF OF ALASKA LORAN-C CHAIN BECAME OPERATIONAL ON JUNE 28, 1977. THE CANADIAN WEST COAST LORAN-C
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CHAIN, WHICH WAS BUILT USING U.S. EQUIPMENT, IS PRESENTLY BEING CALIBRATED AND WILL BE DECLARED OPERATIONAL IN THE NEXT MONTH OR SO. THESE SYSTEMS WILL PROVIDE THE MEANS FOR ACCURATE POSITION FIXING AND NAVIGATION OF TAPS TRADE TANKERS (AND OTHER VESSELS SO EQUIPPED) USING THE RECOMMENDED SHIP'S ROUTING SYSTEM BETWEEN VALDEZ, ALASKA AND WEST COAST PORTS.

7. THE FISCAL YEAR 78 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION BUDGET CONTAINS 8 MILLION DOLLARS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION OF THE PUGET SOUND VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE. AN ADDITIONAL 3.5 MILLION DOLLARS WILL BE PROVIDED IN FISCAL YEAR 79 FOR THE SAME PURPOSE. THE PRESENT RADAR SYSTEM IN PUGET SOUND WILL BE REPLACED. NEW RADAR SITES WILL BE ADDED TO PROVIDE SURVEILLANCE COVERAGE FOR THE STRAIT OF JUAN DE FUCA AND ROSARIO STRAIT. IN ADDITION, THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTER WILL BE EXPANDED AND A COMPUTER-BASED, AUTOMATED-VESSEL-INFORMATION SYSTEM WILL BE INSTALLED.

8. THE BALLAST WATER TREATMENT FACILITY TO BE USED BY TANKERS ARRIVING AT PORT VALDEZ, IS CAPABLE OF PROCESSING ALL BALLAST WATER FROM THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF VESSELS EXPECTED IN PORT AT ANY ONE TIME. ALL PARTICIPATING COMPANIES HAVE AGREED THERE WILL BE NO BALLAST DISCHARGE AT SEA.

9. SHOULD AN INCIDENT OCCUR, THE TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE AUTHORIZATION ACT PROVIDES FOR A FUND OF 100 MILLION DOLLARS TO PAY CLAIMS FOR DAMAGES FROM POSSIBLE DISCHARGES OF OIL BY THE U.S. TANKERS ON A LIABILITY BASIS WITHOUT REGARD FOR FAULT. THE ACT EXPRESSLY AUTHORIZES SUCH PAYMENT TO CANADIANS.
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