

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH U.S. COAST GUARD REAR ADMIRAL MARY LANDRY, FEDERAL ON-SCENE COORDINATOR FOR UNIFIED AREA COMMAND, DEEPWATER HORIZON RESPONSE VIA TELECONFERENCE TIME: 5:00 P.M. EDT DATE: MONDAY, MAY 17, 2010

Copyright (c) 2010 by Federal News Service, Inc., Ste. 500 1000 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA. Federal News Service is a private firm not affiliated with the federal government. No portion of this transcript may be copied, sold or retransmitted without the written authority of Federal News Service, Inc. Copyright is not claimed as to any part of the original work prepared by a United States government officer or employee as a part of that person's official duties. For information on subscribing to the FNS Internet Service, please visit <http://www.fednews.com> or call(202)347-1400

(Note: Please refer to www.dod.mil for more information.)

LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG, (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): (In progress) -- go ahead and get started if that is okay with you.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JIM HESS: That's okay with us. This is Lieutenant Commander Jim Hess. I'm with the External Affairs Branch of the Joint Information Center. And I'm pleased to introduce Rear Admiral Mary Landry. She is the federal on-scene coordinator for Deepwater Horizon response.

And so without further adieu, Admiral.

ADM. LANDRY: Good afternoon. Do you want me to just open with a few remarks?

LT. CDR. HESS: Yes, ma'am.

ADM. LANDRY: It's a pleasure to be here. I'm familiar with this format and the Bloggers Roundtable. We've used this for the last few years in the Coast Guard. And certainly, it's a pleasure to be here, and it's a very good way of trying to reach a large audience and answer questions you might have that you haven't been able to get a chance to get from the regular press interviews and that.

So it's great to be here. Let me give you a little background about how I arrived at this position, and then we'll open it up to questions.

I'm the 8th District commander of the Coast Guard, which is headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana. It's about 26 states, and it includes the Gulf Coast and the offshore oil and gas area, and it also includes, you know, the inland rivers, the Mississippi River, the Missouri, the Ohio.

And as the 8th District commander, I have seven sectors, four of which are the Gulf Coast sectors. And when this incident occurred, one of the sectors, the Morgan City office, was handling the offshore incident, and we were handling the search and rescue case from our New Orleans command center.

And once the incident occurred, it became obvious that the scale and scope was such that we would need to stand up what's called an Area Command. And I'm the federal on-scene coordinator for what would be the Gulf Coast Response.

So some of you are probably familiar with the structure and all that, but I just wanted to give you a context of when I stood up as area commander as the federal on-scene coordinator for the Gulf Coast.

And then, as you all are familiar now, probably, Admiral Allen is the national incident commander. And this is a concept under the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 that says that if the secretary of Homeland Security, Secretary Napolitano, is a leader among equals in the Cabinet of the president and, as a leader among equals, she coordinates incidents that are very nationally significant.

And it soon became apparent that this was not only an issue for the Gulf Coast, but it was an issue for the nation. So Admiral Allen, being named the national incident commander, allows the national-level issues to be worked from D.C. and around. And I'm down here at the area level, working the response.

And I think I'll stop there and allow you to ask questions you might have of this response to date. We're coming up on the one-month anniversary of this incident. LT. CRAGG: Okay, great. Thank you, ma'am.

I know that Brad was the last person to call in. And there was a number of other people that called in.

Can I please get your names, please?

Q This is R.L. Miller.

LT. CRAGG: R.L. Miller?

Q Yes.

LT. CRAGG: Did anyone call in after R.L. Miller? Anyone else?

Q This is Leslie Berliant.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Leslie.

Anyone else?

LT. CRAGG: Okay, thank you, Leslie.

Andrew, you were first on the call. Please go ahead.

Q Thank you. Admiral, Andrew Lubin from Leatherneck Magazine. Thanks for taking the time today.

ADM. LANDRY: Oh, you're welcome.

Q Admiral, a question here for you. The news over the weekend with these undersea plumes of oil several miles by several miles, drifting towards the Loop which is going to bring them into, you know, the Florida Keys, they're afraid. Secretary Salazar and Admiral Allen had been pushing BP to confirm that they're going to accept liability for more than \$75 million. Have they done that? And if not, have they said they're not going to accept liability?

ADM. LANDRY: It's my understanding that the letter was written. I am not up to date on what the response was from BP. I've seen the testimony. I've seen the statement by the CEO. I also know, to date, that we have spent over 500 million (dollars) on this response, some of which is federal dollars under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and the trust fund. But a small percentage is that. We've only reached about 60 million (dollars) there.

The rest of this over \$500 million response has been borne by BP.

Q Okay, thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, Andrew.

Chuck, you were next. Please go ahead.

Q Yes, ma'am. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal. Two very quick items. First of all, can you talk about the status of the Ocean Saratoga's spill? And also, the tar balls that were found on Dauphin Island in Alabama, have they been identified as to their origin?

ADM. LANDRY: I'm not familiar with the first incident, the Saratoga spill?

Q The Ocean Saratoga spill is currently occurring in the Gulf, according to news reports, west of Deepwater Horizon.

ADM. LANDRY: Okay, okay. Well, the tar balls -- I can tell you, the tar balls on Dauphin Island for sure have been identified as linked to this Deepwater Horizon incident. Some of the other tar balls that have been found are not linked to the Deepwater Horizon spill, but we are going to continue to map that. That's a very important process.

And then as far as the Saratoga spill, I haven't been kept up to date with that, but we are monitoring and tracking, you know, all the science on this. And we'll definitely be able to figure out the source

of, you know, what spill, which oil is which and what spill is taking place out there.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you, Chuck.

Dale, you were next.

Q Yes, ma'am. This is Dale Kissinger from MilitaryAvenue.com. Can you tell me how many federal resources you have under your command and where they're from? And do you have any limitations on those? ADM. LANDRY: Let me -- yeah, let me just explain, first of all, I said we spent up to 60 million (dollars) thus far under the federal project, and those are the federal resources. But understand that that trust fund, it's still going to be the cost of the responsible party. The responsible party (will bear ?) these costs, not only for what BP has paid thus far, but also the 60 million (dollars) that we have basically budgeted for with all the federal responses.

The agencies that are involved, I would call it a whole-of-government. We have everything from DOD to National Guard working for the governors, to EPA, Department of Interior, Department of State, Agriculture, Labor. It's a whole-of-government response. There's many facets to the spill. It's very complex. And I would say that, ask me an agency that isn't involved, and I might be able to answer that better than telling you all that are involved.

And as far as the assets themselves, examples of, like, for instance, Navy SUPSALV has skimmers and booms. We've used some of the Navy inventory of booms. We've used NGA, the National Geospatial Agency is here helping us. There's many agencies involved. And that's the national good that's coming from this. This is a terribly tragic incident, but the national good that comes from this and what you can bring together to respond to it is quite remarkable and demonstrates the capabilities that we have as a country.

Q Thank you very much. Can you give me a total number of people involved?

ADM. LANDRY: We're up to almost 20,000 people. And I call you that everybody here Robert is working very hard. I know people are working hard in Mobile and at the command post in Houma. But I also know that people are working hard in agencies across the country. Because even if you're not right here, you're back somewhere else, backing up the people that are here. And there's a tremendous amount of work going on across government, across states and in the private sector. You just cannot believe the effort that's been put forth to respond to this.

Q Thank you very much, ma'am.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Dale.

Thank you, ma'am.

Allison, you're next, please.

Q Yes. My name is Allison Addicott, I'm with The Washington Times. And my question is, I'm interested in the success of the riser insertion tube and how long you think that might last versus the moving on to the notion of this "top kill" model that BP has proposed. And furthermore, the rejection by both -- (inaudible) -- and Salazar as far as the long-time acceptance of the RIT as a workable solution to the problem. ADM. LANDRY: Well, that's a great question, and you've given me an opportunity to put some things in context, because it is very difficult for people to understand in short sound bites or articles or news coverage. It's really hard to understand what's going on with this response.

The riser insertion tube is just a mitigation tool, a mitigation effort to secure the leak from the damaged riser. And the damaged riser sits 500 feet from the wellhead itself.

The wellhead itself, the BOP, the blowout preventer, the lower marine riser, that whole unit that sits above the wellhead is actually the essence of why we've had to prepare for a worst-case scenario and why we've had to bring the resources to bear that we've brought to bear.

We are not responding to only the 5,000 estimated leak from the riser, that this riser insertion tool was supposed to mitigate against. We are responding to a potential total release from the wellhead.

So the "top kill" -- the "top kill" effort is focused on securing the well. And that's got to be the most important thing. So put it in context, that riser insertion tube, it's only plugging a leak that exists. The most important thing is to secure the well itself, secure the source, and that's why "top kill" is so important.

Q Okay. All right, thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Allison.

Thank you, ma'am.

Susan, you were next. Please go ahead.

Q Hi. I just wanted to talk to you about what the Coast Guard is doing to oversee BP's efforts. I understand that, you know, at one point -- (static is heard on the line) -- the Coast Guard was saying it was going to hold BP's feet to the fire. And I just wanted to know, what exactly are you guys doing in that regard?

ADM. LANDRY: Yes, thanks. That's a great question. And it sometimes does confuse people when you talk about a unified command, they talk about the fact -- we don't know why we're getting that interference on this call.

LT. CDR. HESS: Yeah, whoever just joined.

ADM. LANDRY: Oh, okay. Whoever just joined, I guess.

LT. CRAGG: If whoever just joined, if you could please -- okay, it stopped when I started talking. So if it continues, whoever just joined, if they can leave the call and try to call back in. Please, ma'am, please continue.

ADM. LANDRY: Well, basically, this responsible party concept that was born out of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, the legislation, is an important concept, because it means that the spiller will bear the cost of the response. And my authority as a federal coordinator is to hold their feet to the fire, oversee the work they're doing and ensure that we have not slowed down or had any lag in response, or all the resources that need to be brought to bear are brought to bear.

So we (have absolute ?) oversight to make sure this response is efficient, effective and necessary, whatever is necessary to minimize impact on both the environment, the economy, you know, minimize the impact.

So it's a very important nuance, that even though BP is the responsible party, as the federal on-scene coordinator, we can either direct BP to bring more resources and do more or we can bring our own resources, backed up by this trust fund that the oil industry pays into to build. We can use the trust fund. If I have any problems with any resource request that I ask BP or if they don't have the capability to do it, I can use that trust fund money to bring it to bear myself, order it and bring these resources to bear.

So thus far -- and then we will charge the responsible party for everything we order into the fight. So it's a very interesting concept under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. It's very effective in being able to hold the spiller accountable for the spill and ensure that we have the right resources to meet the challenge of responding.

(Static continues.)

Q Thank you.

LT. CDR. HESS: Can people mute their lines, whoever is typing or something or whatever that noise is?

LT. CRAGG: We're getting back feed, so whoever just joined, please exit the call. I will gladly send you a transcript. But when you joined, you're causing back feed for everyone else.

(Static subsides.)

Okay, thank you.

ADM. LANDRY: There we go.

LT. CDR. HESS: Thank you, Lieutenant Cragg.

Also, for our benefit, would everyone please state their name and their affiliation as you're asking the question? Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you everyone. And if that does happen again, if you could exit the call and call back in. For some reason, we were getting back feed. So Judy, you were next. Please go ahead and, again, state your affiliation you're with, please, and your first and last name.

Q Okay. This is Judy Silverstein. I am doing this piece for the Navy Log Blog. Admiral, I was interested in if you could describe some of the Coast Guard expertise that's not readily obvious to the public that might be used in response. Are we using R&D, for example?

ADM. LANDRY: Yes, thank you very much. Great question. This is interesting. There's many people here, but I certainly -- and many agencies here, but I'd love to be able to, for a minute, just talk about the Coast Guard's responsibilities, because, as I said, as a federal on-scene coordinator and our Marine Environment Response Mission is one of the 11 missions we've had. And we're very proud of what we do in this field.

We have everything in the inventory responding in the spill, and that includes the strike teams. We have these strike teams that call under what's called our Deployable Operations Group. And they've responded to things like anthrax after 9/11 in both D.C. and New York. They're able to do pollution response and hazmat response. And they have great expertise in the marine environmental response field.

We also have our 225-foot buoy tenders that are coastal buoy tenders, who do work aids to navigation. But in a case like this, they can actually deploy. They become vessels of opportunity for skimming, and they deploy large oceangoing booms. And they actually have an ability in their holds to hold oil that they skim. So where they normally work aids to navigation marking channels, they can be deployed to a spill like this. And we have those assets here as well with 220-foot coastal buoy tenders which were built after Exxon Valdez and after the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. So they're kind of a multi-service platform.

We have also, you know, myself and others who have come up in this field, many people with many years of experience in pollution response. And I call it the best of the best, you bring all the experts in who have great background and experience in this field. So we have, you know, I could go on and on, the public information assist teams, people that know how to not only do media outreach, but how do you work with communities? How do you establish information networks for communities that have been impacted by this?

So we have people that know how to do liaison work with affected communities and make sure that BP and others responding, we're

coordinating the efforts of all these folks to make sure we're not duplicating anybody else's effort or we're not leaving any gaps.

We do all this under what's called a national, a NIMS system, if you will. And it works with state and federal and local agencies on an incidence response system that we're all very verse in, that we've done for years. So those are just a couple. We've got helicopters doing overflights. We can't take our search and rescue helicopters obviously away from their work, but we've got helicopters doing overflights, helping us, and we've got C-130s helping us look at, you know, where is the oil.

And I should note, though, that the beginning of this incident, we were heavily involved in the search and rescue aspect as well.

But from a pollution standpoint, you know, those are just a couple of examples of the resources that are brought to bear on this.

Q Thank you, Admiral. Also, you had talked about mapping and tracking where the weather and the atmospheric and marine analytics would go. So are you using the Research and Design Center at all?

ADM. LANDRY: You know, the R&D Center, I'm glad you brought that up, because I left them off. We actually have had -- the R&D Center has done some technology work in pollution response that they're able to test during this. And they are also the focal point. There are a lot of private sector entities who have been working on pollution response tools, whether it's skimming systems or whatever. So they're actually running point for us on a concept called alternative technologies.

And we actually set up a team to be able to examine alternative technologies in this spill so that we can -- certainly, what we have to bring to bear the closest to the fight are tried and true and tested technologies. But this is a wonderful opportunity for people who want to help and who want to test their technologies. So they're doing that, the R&D Center is doing that.

As far as the geospatial, there's a collection synchronization matrix that I have right in front of me, that's very interesting, that talks about all the agencies -- NASA, NOAA, the Civil Air Patrol, the Coast Guard -- all the agencies that might be out there doing their work. We are trying to get a synchronization together through the National Geospatial Agency to make sure, okay -- and we have a Canadian-8 that's even doing overflights for us.

So as we take data, whether it's from overflights or it's anything we have to do in terms of where is the oil going, shoreline impact, you know, boom deployment, you know all that stuff, we're actually working with many agencies, and we're collating their data. The satellite imagery that we've used to back up the NOAA trajectories.

So I think there's a -- it's the whole-of-government and whole-of-the-private-sector capability that you try to integrate for an efficient and effective response. And this is absolutely the national

good that I talk about, that is taking place simultaneous with this response. I noted to people that, you know, this isn't a New Madrid fault where we all of a sudden have an earthquake that devastates us. And it's not a Katrina where you're responding after the effects of a storm.

This is very slow-moving, somewhat.

I mean, it's a significant spill, but it could be much worse at this point than it is. And we have an opportunity here to respond to what we have, prepare for a worst-case scenario, but at the same time develop processes and systems and integration that could service a larger, national good when this is all over.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you, Judy.

Mark, you were next. Please go ahead.

Q This is Mark Warren from Esquire. Admiral, thank you for doing this. I wanted to ask you about the efforts to recover the oil that's already in the water, even at depth. Last week, I spoke to a Houston-based engineer named Nick Pozzi who worked for Saudi Aramco in the 1990s and engineered a strategy that successfully recovered 85 percent of a massive spill in the Persian Gulf, using supertankers to suck the oil out of the water and separate it from the water. And they disposed of it or actually used the oil once they got it on land. And thus far, Pozzi has been trying to advance this strategy in a number of ways, and has gotten a negative response from both the Coast Guard and from BP.

I wanted to ask you, are you aware of this strategy, using supertankers? And can you speak more broadly to the oil recovery efforts?

ADM. LANDRY: Yeah, I could envision what you're talking about is a great opportunity. And I'm not familiar with why the Coast Guard or BP might have turned you away. We do have a technical team in Houston with the technical team for BP, overseeing both the interventions on the blowout preventer. And I should say, MMS is there as well, and others.

But we have efforts going on there for the overseeing the interventions on the BOP and the riser. But I think that they also have a team set up to take input from folks around the world, oil companies and others with experience in this from around the world, who might want to come and bring their ideas to this fight. My guess is, they didn't choose the supertanker option -- and I'm speculating here -- but my guess is, they may not have chosen the supertanker option, because they may have felt they had adequate resources in place with what they have now.

We have several large offshore skimmers that are part of the response requirement that these companies have to have in this region, pre-stages, whether it's the oil tankers that supply the waters here or the refineries and the facilities. There are requirements to have things pre-stages that were brought to bear on this spill response.

So I think they went first to the inventory that is part of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, required equipment to be pre-staged and ready to deploy quickly. And once they got that inventory in place, you know, they've been adding things as they felt they needed. But my guess is, they may not have requested the assistance, because they felt they had adequate resources.

And I feel we have adequate resources, or I would have directed BP to bring more to respond to what we're dealing with right now.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Mark.

Thank you, ma'am.

Brendan, you're next. Please go ahead.

Q Hi, Admiral. Brendan Demelle from EnergyBoom.com. I had a question about whether this spill has reached the Loop Current. Do we know that? What happens when it does? And when it reaches international waters, would there be a response from Mexico or Cuba? Is the Coast Guard accepting any offers from foreign entities for help with the -- (inaudible) -- response? And you know, just generally, who's responsible for oil once it reaches international waters?

ADM. LANDRY: Interestingly, there are several questions there, but let me try to help you with the first one. The Loop Current itself has been discussed the last several days, because the oil and the leading edge of the oil spill, the sheening areas, you know, the outer perimeters are mostly sheen. The Loop Current interface was 50 miles off, then it went to 40, then it went back to 50, then it was 35 miles. And it's moving closer.

However, there is no contact or interface yet with the current. Now, NOAA can model it. They've been working with us to model it. And we've been working with the state of Florida since day one to say, okay, if this were to come in contact with the Loop Current, you know, what could happen? But what we see now is leading-edge sheen that by the time it would reach Florida or Cuba might not even be there anymore. We're talking several days. And this is leading-edge sheen. And the largest parts of the oil spill, we're still responding to in the general area here.

That being said, from day one, to project a worst-case scenario, we have a Department of State representative here at the command post in Robert. We have a Department of State representative working with the national response team in Washington, D.C., and they have been

coordinating outreach and discussions to -- I don't know if they've talked to Cuba, but I know we've talked to Mexico. We even talked to Mexico here, because we have a joint response plan with Mexico that we exercise all the time called the MEXUS Plan, that was built out of a 1979 -- (inaudible) -- well release in Mexican waters that affected the U.S.

So we have been in contact with Mexico from the normal relationships we have in spill-response preparation from this region, as well as at the national level in the relationships we have. That's for spill response.

As far as -- (inaudible) -- obviously, as I mentioned, we have a Canadian -- (inaudible) -- here. We've had I think some countries -- I don't know if they officially offered help or if the State Department just reached out and has had discussion with some countries. But that's being coordinated with the State Department as part of the national response team in Washington, D.C.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Brendan.

Thank you, ma'am.

Tim, you were next. Please go ahead.

Q And there's some new feedback.

LT. CRAGG: It started when, ma'am, when you started talking, it started with -- (inaudible).

ADM. LANDRY: Now it's going on when you're talking.

(Cross talk.)

LT. CRAGG: Okay, I think it stopped.

I'm sorry, who is this?

Q This is Tim Hurst from Ecopolitology.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, please go ahead, Tim. Q Admiral, my question -- now that BP has resumed the use of subsea dispersants, I was hoping you could elaborate or comment on what if anything is being done in the ongoing process as these are being deployed at much deeper depths or, you know, unprecedented depths in unprecedented volumes.

ADM. LANDRY: I can. And thanks for your question. And I know -- if you didn't have the benefit of hearing or getting our quotes from any of the press conferences we've had, I really explained very carefully, as we march down the road to consideration for subsea dispersant, technically, we had pre-approval for dispersant in the Gulf of Mexico. And this pre-approval was granted, and it's built into the response plan.

After, you know, several years of analysis and peer review and science looking at it, it's certainly a trade-off.

When you decide to use dispersants even on the surface, you're basically saying that, you know, we already have the spill, we've got to minimize environmental impact as much as possible. And the value of dispersants off shore outweighs the benefit or the impact that could be felt near shore with the marshes and other areas.

That being said, I have a great respect for those who are concerned about the whole ecology of the Gulf of Mexico. So when we started using dispersants on the surface, it was really clearly with the guidance and protocols that are established in this pre-approval agreement. And we stuck very strictly to the protocols that are outlined.

We also started thinking about subsea injection, because, as you know, never been tried before in those depths, BP was proposing it. We were looking at it to say, you know, could you have less impact? And obviously, you use less volume. But could you have less impact, less negative impact overall? And so it was through the efforts of both the regional response team and the national response team.

I technically could have signed off on it right here. EPA and I could have signed off on it through the RRT right here and just moved ahead. But when that pre-approval was given for the surface dispersant, the pre-approval never envisioned subsea injection. And that's why we moved so cautiously to cross that threshold and consider it.

And we only did it after a series of three different tests. The first test took place, and then folks came back and looked at the results and said, you know, I want a little more testing in a few other areas. So they added some other sampling criteria. And we required through the second test that sampling criteria.

And then they examined and said, you know, let's do a third test just to make sure we're not overlooking anything. And they were doing this in dialogue, in concert with the head of the EPA, Lisa Jackson, the head of NOAA, Dr. Lubchenco, and the career people that work for all those folks, who were heavily engaged in hard work and dialogue as we began to consider using this.

And they even engaged scientists as they crossed the threshold before they made the announcement to go ahead and use it. We are doing a very strict monitoring protocol right now. As we do this injection of subsea dispersant, there are sample being taken through the water column on the surface. You know, they're using all the technologies that are necessary to examine the impact that this is going to have. And they're not going to just stop with the sampling and analysis while we're injecting subsea dispersant. It's understood there will be long-term studies, near-term and long-term studies about this.

So it's a threshold we crossed. The decision was made based on extensive evaluation of the pros and cons. But I can tell you that I

know the administrator of the EPA and the head of NOAA both want to engage the scientific community as we examine and analyze what the impacts are. And that's what will be done and what is promised to everyone.

Q Okay, thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am.

And thank you, Tim.

And the last time we got the feedback, it was due to a speaker phone being on, so please do not put your phone on speaker while we continue this conversation. Just wanted to put an admin note.

(Cross talk.)

Byron, please go ahead.

Q Yes, hello, this is Byron King with Agora Financial. Hello, Admiral. You've mentioned a lot of different things in terms of what assets you have out there and who's doing what and who's monitoring what. Could you address just the entire command and control issue? You've got airspace, seaspace, underwater column all full of things that are moving around, plus you're deploying booms. Who's in charge of making sure things don't bump into each -- (inaudible) -- cross booms and things like that? What kind of waterspace and airspace management, who's exercising that, and how are they doing it?

ADM. LANDRY: That's a great question. There are a couple of things at play here. First of all -- and they're based on lessons learned and experiences we've had, both with Katrina and Rita, Gustav and certainly the work that we did as a nation in support of the Haiti operations.

When we prepare for whether it's worst-case scenario or hurricane season or whatever, we build relationships with other federal agencies, with DOD. And what we're doing right now in this response is actually taking advantage of it. Let me give you a couple of concepts. First of all, the (one called ?) airspace de-confliction, and this is a pre-scripted mission assignment, if you will. This is something that we can use in any response, that is actually an Air Force capability that was worked in Haiti. When they were doing the response to Haiti initially, before the ports were even able to be opened, the Air Force was landing and helping with deciding who would land at the airport and keep it safe and keep others from getting injured and making the situation worse.

And they got it from a point of 40 planes per day to 140 planes per day, bringing in relief supplies. And they did this through a concept called airspace de-confliction.

Well, I happened to meet the two-star general, Dean, who's out of Tyndall Air Force Base. I met him at a hurricane preparedness

conference a few months back. And you always get to know people before you get into these situations. So immediately we thought of General Dean and the team from the Air Force at Tyndall. And I had already visited the command and gotten the tour and gotten the brief on what they did in Haiti, so we knew that was a logical choice to assist us in airspace de-confliction.

What we cautioned them about was, there's 35,000 people working off shore on any given day here. And there's a lot of flights to and from, bringing the workers back and forth and bringing supplies. So we just cautioned them that, as you go in to support this airspace, we don't want to so much as take it over as we want to facilitate and keep it safe. So we asked them to tread lightly in, you know, managing this airspace, which they have done highly successfully and with great cooperation.

That's just the airspace de-confliction. On the water, there's a safety zone in place. And then we work through the Coast Guard. We have a concept that we learned from Gustav and Ike called maritime transportation system recovery. And that's where you work with all the stakeholders, whether it's commercial shipping, commercial fishermen, recreational folks. You have port communities that you can stay in contact with and communicate with to keep them apprised, so that you do a similar thing with the maritime users to say, how can we facilitate commerce and facilitate your use and not impact you any more than you need to be? And how can we keep energy, you know, going with the offshore oil and gas industry? How can we make sure everybody's needs are met and de-conflict that and minimize the disruptions as much as possible while still making sure things are safe?

So that was stood up as well. And they have stood up what are called decanting, or washing stations, if you will, that if any vessel gets oiled we can clean those off and so they can continue up the Mississippi River and everything. And that's a very organized system that we employed in Haiti as well. And the concept is called maritime transportation system recovery, and the Coast Guard runs point on that. And we stood that up very early on across the Gulf. So those are just two examples of how we're managing safety.

And safety is everybody's responsibility. It's mine, it's BP's, it's everybody who's out there. And it can be taken down to the lowest person. We have OSHA folks here and we have -- everybody to help to make sure we oversee safety.

Our goal is to make sure we don't have anybody get injured or hurt anymore. We already lost 11 people initially in this incident, and we don't want to have any more negative impact than necessary. Q Can I ask just a quickie follow up on that?

Are you using UAVs or any kind of unmanned vehicles for real-time monitoring, or are you doing things with satellites and airplane tracking and then it all comes back and you try to coordinate it, or do all the signals -- de-confliction and such?

ADM. LANDRY: We considered using CBP's Predator at one point, but we haven't needed it. We've used other assets to give us that same capability. But the Coast Guard's new 144 plane has a platform that they can -- has a -- what do you call it? -- a pallet, if you will, that gives us some good surveillance.

And we have other assets, as I said, that are giving us good surveillance. So we're integrating what is capable, what can be flown (and ?) capable by air, along with satellite and other technologies. So we certainly considered all suites' availability in the inventory.

And we almost did use the CBP Predator, but we found we had what we needed. And then, like I said, Civil Air Patrol and others. So we're using everything and trying to be as efficient and effective as possible. And we don't have gaps that I know of, and I certainly am satisfied with what we've got so far.

I think what we're trying to do that might help anybody out there is they're working on a common operating picture that would be available to everybody, and we're trying to get that on our Web site so that you can see what we see in a more timely fashion. And we owe you that, and we've been pushing that very hard from here. And hopefully, we'll continue to improve that so that you can go to the Web site and you see what we see.

Q Great. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you, Byron.

Brad, you're next. Please go ahead.

Q Hi. This is Brad Johnson, with ThinkProgress.

I just wanted to, first off, thank you for your work. I hope you're getting some sleep.

And I want to talk about the questions of the scope of the spill and then recognize that you said that you're committed to finding the truth about this. But I really think that there's been a serious amount of misinformation and lack of transparency on this issue.

So my understanding is that the last time that an official government estimate was made of the flow extent was in April, by NOAA looking at satellite data. BP officials have testified that it was impossible to estimate the flow rate from the seabed, even though independent experts were able to generate pretty confident estimates based on 30 seconds of video footage.

So I'm wondering if you're committed to getting more video released or, if BP isn't letting the government have that video, if you believe that it's possible to make at least some kind of estimates of the flow rate from the subsea, especially now that there's a riser insertion tube, which clearly must have pressure readings and flow rate associated with that.

Has the decision with the --- in kind of broader questions like that, you have the decision to inject subsea dispersants, and is that being made without a real knowledge of the outflow? Is the 5,000-barrel estimate that you mentioned in the call today, does that have an upper bound of what the independent experts are saying is possibly 3 million gallons -- so, an order of magnitude larger?

ADM. LANDRY: Yeah. Certainly we are trying to be transparent, and there has been nothing kept from you or anyone that we haven't analyzed.

As far as the video goes, there is a request from --- as I said, you probably could get it on Senator Nelson's Web site. There's a request from the Senate for the video. I know we have also -- working with BP, trying to get that video as well.

I would caution that the folks that have done the analysis on what was released, I think it was six seconds. I don't think it was 30 seconds that BP released. It was six.

And in that analysis they did a six-second spot in time, which -- I'm not questioning their modeling capability or their methodology, I just think it's --- I don't know that a six-second shot in time is going to give you a full picture.

There is not ---

Q I mean --- I just want to say that it's consistent with the independent estimates of the spill estimate from satellite data as well. ADM. LANDRY: Right. Right. Let me tell you -- let me continue, because this is a really complex answer.

First of all, we do not have the ability to read the outflow at the riser insertion tube. You might think you can, but you really --- there was no way to do that. There was no way to --- it would have taken longer to design the riser insertion tube if you wanted to attempt to do some sort of a flow rate.

What they do have from the riser insertion tube is they have a way of decanting. Once the oil and gas and water mix reaches the surface on the Enterprise, they can decant. And that's how they were getting the estimate of the thousand-gallons --- or, thousand barrels, excuse me --- estimate of what they've retrieved thus far.

And as they get more fidelity on that, how much they get out of the riser insertion tube, they will share that with you. BP will share that with you.

What we also have going on is we have the Minerals and Management Service, the Coast Guard and other federal agencies working on a couple different things. Certainly we want to get fidelity on what we think the estimate of oil is.

When you're in a response like this, you have to prepare and respond to a worst-case scenario. So we have been preparing and responding an upward-bound of what could potentially be approximately -- we said 5,000 barrels, but it could be 55,000 per day. That if the well let go, the design engineers will tell you that it could be approximately 55,000 barrels per day.

We don't think we have that much, because we've got satellite imagery; we know what we're responding to. We know how much we're seeing on the surface; we can estimate that. So the upward-bound of worst-case could be approximately 55,000 barrels.

But what's more important is we are doing the analysis. We are working to do the analysis. A federal team is working to do the analysis now, based on the information that we can get from the video and from the ROV, to see if we can get more fidelity on the actual amount. And that's something that will be very important as we go down the road for the national resource damage assessment process and for other things.

So I will tell you that if we have information, we will share that with you. But I don't want to promise anything that -- I don't want to promise things that we can't deliver on soon enough, and I don't want to get ahead of the analysis that's being done right now, because that would be inappropriate for me to speculate. But we are seeking that kind of fidelity of what is -- the estimate of really -- (inaudible) --- been coming out of this well.

Q So just to be clear, BP is refusing to release the video to the government?

ADM. LANDRY: No, that's not true.

Q Okay. When you said you -- that we are trying to get that video, what do you mean?

ADM. LANDRY: We are requesting that video. We are ---

Q And so BP has not yet given the video?

ADM. LANDRY: They may have. They may have very recently given the video. I don't know for a fact that they've released it yet, but they may have given it to us. We have requested it from them, and we are seeking to do an analysis.

Q And has an estimate of the slick extent, or the spill, been done based on satellite imagery since the 5,000-barrel-a-day estimate was generated at the end of April?

ADM. LANDRY: There is work also going on on what they call the fate of the oil. Because the original estimate is an estimate; it's always an estimate. And then you're responding to -- you're dealing with the response as it appears on the surface, as you -- what you see coming up on the shoreline and that.

And we haven't had significant impact, but we've been working hard at this, between controlled burn, dispersant use, skimming, which -- we've been working hard at what we call the fate of the oil, to analyze the efficacy of all these tools, if you will, in the toolkit. And as we get that analysis --

This is not an exact science. These are all estimates, because the oil and water mix, even as you deal with dispersants, you're trying to figure out what's the analysis of how much we have applied on the surface and subsurface, and what's the estimate of the efficacy of that. There's a thing called the fate of the oil. And they are doing an analysis to figure out how much do we think we've really been dealing with since the start of this response? So both of those things -- the estimate of the out-flow, based on the video analysis, and then also the efficacy of the response.

And based on what we know we've collected thus far and what we know we may have dispersed thus far, those -- both those analysis -- data analysis work is going on in both those areas as we speak.

Q But the official estimate is over two weeks old right now, right? Is that correct?

ADM. LANDRY: Yes. (Inaudible.)

LT. CRAGG: Okay, thank you, Brad. I want to make sure I get to RL Miller and Leslie to get their questions in.

Forgive me, ma'am, for interrupting you.

RL Miller, you were next.

Q Hi. I'm RL Miller. I'm a blogger at Daily Kos and other places. And I'm sort of trying to -- forgive me if I ask questions that have already been asked before. There is a great deal of what I guess I'd call anger and suspicion in the liberal blogosphere regarding things that have been said.

Have you seen any videotape besides these few minutes that BP has put out?

ADM. LANDRY: Have I seen personally videotape other than the few minutes? Yes. Yes, because we've been monitoring this sub-surface outflow and we've been monitoring the work with ROV cameras, yes, in the command post here.

Q Why hasn't that other videotape been released?

ADM. LANDRY: Because it's a visual. We're watching a visual from the command post. The archives of the actual tapes are kept in Houston at the corporate headquarters for BP. We don't have the -- we're not archiving the video. We're watching it as we respond to the spill.

And we're very focused on the response. We're not -- there will come a time when it's really, really important to understand how much is coming out of this well, for natural resource damage, for -- to let people fully understand the impact.

We were comfortable with the estimate that was given, the 5,000 barrel per day estimate. It's only an estimate. I was comfortable with working from that. Did I think it was exact? No. I've never trusted that. I've never personally trusted that as an exact number. We are responding daily to what we see and what we are experiencing in the cleanup. And it is a very, very good cleanup thus far. I think we're having good success thus far.

But we don't rest on our laurels for a day, because the weather might not cooperate with us tomorrow. We have very good weather right now, and some days have been better than others. But I would say that until we secure the well, we can't rest on our laurels.

And the truth of the matter is we've always had to have in the back of our mind that it could be much worse, that at any given time -- and the reason I've stayed so committed to this and the reason we've taken it as seriously as we have and the reason we have 20,000 people and all the response equipment in place is because since day one, we have always prepared for a worst-case. That it could be 55,000 barrels per day, which is an extraordinary amount which would have tremendous impact.

And there has already been impact. I'm not trying to diminish that, because believe me, I have so much respect -- I don't care where anybody's beliefs lie, on which side of the aisle. I really care about the environment and I care about the people that have been impacted. I care about the fishermen. You care about the ecosystem, you know? You care about the species that could be at risk. There's a lot of things on your mind in this response.

So I don't get too fixated on the 5,000 barrels per day. I really focus on how important and aggressive we have to be in the response to mitigate the impact.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am.

Let's get Leslie right quick. Leslie, please go ahead with your question.

Q Hi. This is Leslie Berliant from SolveClimate.

I just want to go back to the subsea use of dispersants once more. And I'm curious if you know what impacts were tested concerning their use. For example, did that include impacts on coral reefs?

ADM. LANDRY: When the decision was made to go ahead and consider subsea dispersants, they're thinking of the whole ecosystem. They're thinking of the surface of the -- they're thinking of the whole water column; they're thinking subsurface of the ocean floor.

These are people who are passionate. The people working in this command post, the career civil servants, the folks that are in all these positions are very passionate about their work.

And we have a unit called the environmental unit, and if you could listen to them and see how many hours they've worked at this and how much they've really debated and discussed how important it was to make sure all of the sampling protocols and everything was in place, to ensure they capture every element of this threshold.

I cannot emphasize enough that people did not proceed into this very lightly.

And we said that we wanted to secure the source and we wanted to fight this offshore, as far offshore as possible. And then we wanted to minimize the environmental and economic impact.

And when we said fight this offshore, it didn't mean that we weren't concerned about the impacts to the offshore environment or the water column or the subsurface. We really are -- we really feel the whole ecosystem is important, and I want to emphasize that.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, Leslie.

Now, I know there was someone else that called in. If I didn't call on you, can you please state your name? (No audible response.) Anyone else?

Ma'am, we have about 10 minutes left before the wrap-up of today's roundtable. I wanted to turn it over to you, pending any other questions by the group that is on the call.

If there no further questions, ma'am, the floor is yours if you'd like to end with any closing statements.

Q Jen, I do have one.

Q Yeah, Jen, so do I.

LT. CDR. HESS: Excuse me folks, this is Lieutenant Commander Jim Hess again. There was someone who was dropped off the call in progress, and they have e-mailed the question. Oh, they have not e-mailed the question in yet, but we'll -- go ahead and proceed.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, Chuck and Andrew. And if there's any other follow-on questions, you can contact Lieutenant Commander Jim Hess and he can get the answers to your questions.

So Chuck, please go ahead.

Q Yeah. Admiral, you're using massive quantities of boom and dispersant and things like that. And what alarmed me the other day was seeing a news report that quantities had been flown in from the North Slope of Alaska.

Are we getting to a point where potentially we don't have the supply to fight a second leak or a spill?

ADM. LANDRY: What did you say? What kind of dispersant did you say?

Q Boom and dispersement, or dispersal agent.

ADM. LANDRY: Oh, boom. I'm sorry. Boom and dispersants.

Q Yeah.

ADM. LANDRY: Okay. We are not concerned at this point with quantities, because we -- they, BP, has approached every manufacturer of dispersant and every manufacturer of boom, and they are in -- they are a global company with global reach. And they have contacted all these folks.

And we've been very fortunate. I don't know if you're -- if you've had a chance to see what we're dealing with, but we've had very minimal shoreline impact to date, and we've had very, very good success with fighting this offshore to date. And certainly there's a huge amount of -- like I've never seen before -- materials just to respond that are pre-staged across the Gulf Coast.

So I know that they've been upping the boom inventory and continue to aggressively add to the inventory. And so I'm not concerned right now that we're going to run out of boom or that we're going to run out of dispersant, at this point.

Q Well, my question went to if there was a second incident, say, in Prudhoe Bay.

ADM. LANDRY: Oh, I see. Yeah, that's a great -- oh, I see where you're going. And that's a great question.

The whole concept of the national incident commander, when Admiral Allen was established to watch the national issues, one of the issues was that risk mitigation that was necessary to say make sure that not only the Gulf Coast is covered, but let's make sure we don't leave any other locations at risk.

And so there was an analysis across the country outside of the Gulf Coast to make sure none of the resources that came to this came from other places and left places vulnerable. And that would require waivers, if you know how it works after Exxon Valdez, that anybody who is bringing response resources to this area would have to have a waiver to take them out of their area.

And that was done, and we're confident that we have not had to issue waivers for leaving other places at risk.

Q Thank you. LT. CRAGG: And Lieutenant Commander Hess, did you receive the e-mail question yet?

LT. CDR. HESS: No, we have not. But I would like to let -- thank everyone on the call for being here. And the admiral's going to -- (inaudible) -- some closing remarks here in a second. But if you have any final questions or follow-up questions --

Q (Inaudible.)

Q We have one. We have one.

ADM. LANDRY: Yeah.

Q Yeah. Admiral, Andrew Lubin again.

Ma'am, with the big slick down -- with the big problem with the BP disaster and the other leak that Chuck Simmins has been referring to, are you or your people going out and looking at all the other oil rigs in the Gulf to make sure that they've actually done the -- (inaudible) -- correctly, have enough emergency plans that are accurate, and that if this happens again, people won't be just kind of starting from scratch and looking around and hoping for the best?

ADM. LANDRY: Can you identify who you are and what --

Q Yes, I'm sorry. Yes. Andrew Lubin, Leatherneck Magazine.

ADM. LANDRY: Okay. And I'm glad I have a chance, because -- to answer that, because I do recall, come to think of it, I'm the 8th District commander, and while I'm doing this response my chief of staff is actually running the rest of the 8th District. And I do recall getting the alert on that other incident. It came to mind after I had answered the other question, so --

We are still paying very close attention to what's going on in the rest of the Gulf, both the Coast Guard and the Minerals and Management Service. And I know for a fact the Minerals and Management Service actually surveyed every rig and every operation out there to see if anybody was involved in the drilling of relief wells or the activity that this particular rig was involved in when the accident occurred.

And they've done some follow-up checks to make sure anybody in that situation has done -- it's like an audit and a special oversight -- because of this incident. So there's been extra attention applied from the Minerals and Management Service to this, and I also know that folks in the Coast Guard are absolutely paying attention to what's going on in terms of other spill responses.

I actually saw on the news an explosion in Houston, and I know my folks in Houston, Texas, I'm sure are responding to that refinery explosion. So we are -- while I'm very focused on this spill response, I can assure you that the other Coast Guard and other agencies are doing the work.

And that's what's so important as you try to sustain a massive effort like this, with 20,000 people involved and all the resources in place.

We still have to get on with the rest of the country's business, and that's why it was not lost on me when Admiral Allen was named the national incident commander, and then we experienced an attempted terrorist attack in New York City that evening with the attempted bomb.

You sit there and realize how much we have to focus on this, but we also have to -- and then we have this terrible national flood. There are things that are taking place around the rest of the country, so you have to make sure you stay focused on this and then you allow others to focus on the things that are also important going on in the nation.

Q Ma'am -- or Lieutenant. Judy Silverstein again.

A follow-on to that would be, so, has there been any talk about expanding the use of Reservists for the Coast Guard or other DOD partners? And then the second part of that would also be with hurricane season coming to the Gulf, are there further mitigation plans, since -- we've been lucky with weather so far.

ADM. LANDRY: Yup. That's a great question. We actually did get a recall stood up right away for up to 500 Reservists for the Coast Guard and certainly the National Guard was brought in to support the states.

And we've got a great surge capacity in this country to assist in something like that, and we're very fortunate to have that ability to surge when we need to. I know it was necessary and a Godsend after 9/11. I know it was necessary and very helpful in Katrina and other things like that.

But what we're now very focused on is what is the footprint needed to sustain this effort? And obviously, if they have success with top kill this weekend, if they have success with top kill, what might be needed might be less than what we have here now. But -- I don't want to get too far ahead; however, we do have folks in a planning cell that are looking at that sustainment plan.

And think about it. It's not just the Coast Guard or the National Guard.

Q Right.

ADM. LANDRY: It's NOAA, it's EPA, it's the Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, it's the states, it's the counties, it's the parishes, it's the private sector.

So there's so many people involved in this, we have to figure out how can we sustain this effort and minimize the impact economically and environmentally, and then still prepare for hurricane season and other things that may come. And we're very focused on that and in dialogue with the national teams and focused on that as well.

Q Okay. And then the --

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, Judy. We're wrapping up. We have two minutes before the end of the roundtable (duty ?). So if you have follow-on questions, please e-mail and I'll make sure to send that to --

Q Absolutely. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Ma'am, the floor is yours.

ADM. LANDRY: Okay. Well, thanks everybody, for this time. It was really enjoyable to just sit here and be able to hear from you, because it's important to know what concerns you. It's important to stay on top of it.

I'm going to walk away with a couple thoughts. Obviously, the transparency piece, which we've tried from day one. We want you to trust that what we're --

I'm a public servant. I'd a federal public servant. I've been doing this for over 30 years, and I highly value my integrity and the fact that I want people to trust and believe that we're being as transparent as possible.

I also walk away with an understanding and an appreciation for how important it is to -- there is a larger national good that's coming from this. I cannot -- I prepared -- I did work on H5N1 preparedness,

the pandemic preparedness. And I've done responses, obviously, to 9/11 and other things.

And if I could just make you -- let you understand and appreciate the larger national good that comes from working through the things we've worked through here. It's a tremendous effort on the part of everyone involved.

And I thank you all for your support and attention. And let's not forget that there are communities here along the Gulf Coast, what was most on my mind when I got here, and I've lived in New Orleans for a year -- what was most on my mind is that the Gulf Coast communities have been impacted a lot. They've been impacted greatly from natural disasters and things like that. And I think they're resilient people and they're very strong, but I also think there's only so much resilience you can have. So the most -- the best we can do to minimize the stress and be a buffer for them so that the people of these communities can feel confident that we're doing everything we can to minimize the impact they feel, that's important to us. And that's why we're so committed to doing a good job here.

So I thank all of you for your time and attention and for what you do in communicating with the American people what's going on out here.

Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, ma'am.

And as a note, a transcript will be provided to everyone on this call. As soon as it is completed, I'll make sure that everyone receives it.

Thank you, and this ends today's Bloggers Roundtable. Thank you, ma'am, and thank you for everyone who attended today.

END.