

THE TASMAN SPIRIT

The role of IMO representatives
during salvage operations off the port
of Karachi

The single hulled, Aframax tanker **Tasman Spirit** ran aground whilst entering the port of Karachi under pilotage and laden with over 67,000 Tonnes of Iranian Light Crude Oil on 27 July 2003.

She stranded outside the curving approach channel and to the east of the S7 buoy during squally weather. It was hoped that refloating her would be a straight forward operation using tugs supplied by the Karachi Port Trust and Navy, given she had grounded on mud and sand.



THINGS DON'T GO AS PLANNED

- Forward tanks were breached and a little oil was lost when the **Tasman Spirit** Grounded.
- The ship's bows remained obstinately fast, defying attempts to refloat the vessel.
- A possible theory was the bows had impaled the wreck of a dredger that had grounded and sunk many years before.
- Conditions on site prevented meaningful side scan and multi-beam sonar surveys.
- The after part of the hull, including buoyant machinery spaces remained afloat, pounded by a 4-metres high monsoon swell. **Tasman Spirit** began breaking up on 13 August 2003, ultimately breaking in half.
- Cargo loss became both persistent and heavy, severely disrupting both economic and leisure activities in the general area.
- A Lloyds Open Form 2000 was signed and agreed with Tsalvaris on 30 July 2003, SCOPIC being invoked on 13 August 2003.

This was Pakistan's first major marine pollution incident

- When SCOPIC was invoked, it was accepted the **Tasman Spirit** was likely to become a total loss.
- Removal of cargo (and other pollutants) became a priority.
- Over 27,000 tonnes of Iranian Light Crude Oil ultimately polluted the sea, port, and littoral areas.
- The National Government and Sind Province was still recovering from recent heavy and disastrous flooding.
- As specialist representatives for concerned parties arrived in Karachi and salvage and cargo recovery operations became more complex, an appeal was made to the International Maritime Organization, a United Nations Agency, to field a 2-man technical mission to advise and assist the Government and Karachi Port Trust. The mission's brief and scope was wide ranging. Only aspects of the salvage operation will be considered in detail.

This is IMO, we want you to go to Karachi



Miracles take a little longer!

- When?
- Tonight
- Why? A valid point, the **Tasman Spirit** never hit the news headlines in Europe. A call to Lloyds Intelligence produced a fast learning curve.
- People go on holiday in August. MCA Headquarters was conspicuous by its lack of staff and I had front line duty call. On a personal basis, my wife and I were on the verge of buying a new house - and as we had been married for less than 2 weeks, her opinion may have differed from IMO's!
- I left 5 days later, when a colleague returned from his family holiday.
- *Once you agree to assist IMO, don't expect any further help or advice. Consider:-*
- Your own employer's policy towards travel outside the EC.
- Establishing contact with the embassy or High Commission of the country you are visiting. The Pakistan High Commission in London did everything they could to help. The UK Foreign Office was advising against travel to Pakistan at the time.
- Funding. Nothing apart from an expenses claim form emerged from IMO - and the organization is not noted for its speed when settling claims. You the individual, or your employer will need to be able to underwrite travel and subsistence costs until they are repaid.

Personal Considerations

- Visas. I was able to visit the Pakistan High Commission in London, on my way to the airport where protocols were dealt with.
- Vaccinations. Most of mine were out of date. My doctor fell about with laughter when I explained the time scale. A visit to the drop-in medical centre on London Waterloo Station solved that problem, at a price!
- Accommodation. The Pakistan High Commission ensured I was booked into the same hotel as Arvid Krakenes, my IMO colleague. Being next to the US embassy in an Islamic country, wasn't possibly the best location.
- Medicines. Buy before you go! Include anti malarians, Imodium or similar and simple pain killers. Water purifying tablets too are a good idea. My employers in the UK provided a comprehensive 1st aid kit in a satchel. It went as cabin baggage on the aircraft. Don't forget sharp appliances when flying. Keep it with you. It wasn't handy when somebody nearly died in front of me. It was from then on and put to good use when somebody else was seriously injured.
- Take a good torch with you. Power cuts can and do happen.
- Local customs; a briefing from the Pakistan Naval Attaché was invaluable.
- Personal security. Much of that is common sense. IMO reminded me that as a UN worker, I should head for the nearest UN compound, should civil strife occur.

A group of men are seated around a large, light-colored conference table in a meeting room. One man in the foreground is wearing a dark shirt and is looking towards the center. Another man in a white shirt is seated next to him, also looking towards the center. In the background, a man in an orange shirt is working on a laptop. A man in a dark shirt is seated next to him, looking at the laptop. On the table, there is a red cup, a small box of tissues, and a green rotary telephone. The room has a white wall and a window with a brown frame. The ceiling is white with a recessed light fixture.

Arvid Krakenes and I had never met before. He was a qualified Marine Engineer, my background was as a Merchant Navy Deck Officer, with considerable experience of both oil and chemical tankers. It was a good mix of skills for the task we faced.

We focused on assisting the Pakistan authorities and Karachi Port Trust to the best of our ability, regardless of consequence.

An immediate problem to tackle was the relationship between the Karachi Port Trust and Salvors, which had become entrenched, with both dialogue and liaison breaking down badly. Day-to-day communication had become virtually non-existent.

Following the appointment of Tsalvaris as salvors, a brief salvage proposal had been submitted concerning refloating of the **Tasman Spirit**. This barely covered an A4 sheet, lacked detail and did not reflect the change of events that caused SCOPIC to be invoked.

Nothing further in the way of progress reports and plans had been submitted. The concerns of the KPT in particular, in whose waters **Tasman Spirit** lay, was understandable.

A routine of daily action reports prepared by the salvors was instigated. daily visits to the wreck site became part of our morning routine, often accompanied by KPT personnel. Progress and problems were discussed with the salvors and reports were delivered by hand, to the appropriate desks ashore.

KPT provided the logistics that made this possible.

The salvors were working in difficult conditions on a ship that was literally falling apart under their feet.



At times, problems outstripped solutions.



Liaison between salvors and authorities was a priority task

- The KPT bent over backwards to provide their IMO advisors with facilities, including IT support, at a time when Karachi was being crippled by the 'Master Blaster' Computer Virus.
- The salvors acknowledged the need for daily reports and an updated and comprehensive salvage plan.
- Mistrust caused the salvors to regard IMO representatives as amiable spies at best. A near tragedy at the wreck site put relationships on firmer foundations. One of the IMO reps had extensive knowledge of both search & rescue techniques and 1st Aid. Both were put to good effect.
- When a salvage master and engineer were released from intensive care beds in Karachi, there was a reluctance to have them repatriated. We were able to help.
- The IMO reps were able to bring together an acknowledgement of the problems faced by both salvors and shore authorities. Out of that emerged solutions.

Logistics could be a nightmare



- Equipment and personnel required for the salvage operation had to be brought in from abroad. The salvors became increasingly frustrated with bureaucratic delays. IMO Representatives discussed this issue with the Operations Manager of KPT and resources were fast tracked through Customs and Immigration.
- Finding suitable small lightening tankers, able to operate in shallow waters was extremely difficult. These ships engage in the clean oil and chemical trade. Their operators are not receptive to transporting Crude Oil. When the **Fair Jolly**, the ship initially used for lightening severely damaged herself against **Tasman Spirit**, a replacement ship seemed impossible to charter.
- Eventually a suitable tanker, the **Sea Angel** was found by word of mouth. In the interim, the KPT provided a small fleet of barges, including a Naval Lighter which was not really theirs, to allow cargo and bunker transfer to continue, albeit at a slower pace.
- Cargo and bunker transfer was achieved using Framo TK 150 submersible impellor pumps. TK80s were needed for tank stripping over the oil / water interface. They had to be flown in from Europe and a delay occurred when one of the charged hydraulic hoses started leaking in the aircraft. OSRL offered the loan of a small capacity Desmi screw pump, which ultimately was not needed.
- The salvage tug **SB408** suffered multiple generator failure and lacked power to start her main engines. Spares had to be sourced from Europe, or so the salvors thought, bringing operations to a halt. A member of KPT staff, a Chief Engineer by training, arrived with a carrier bag, containing the necessary parts. He also fitted them...

Advice to potential IMO consultants responding to a crisis



- Research the mission you are expected to attend.
- Think about funding. Are you likely to run out of money? Can you afford the short-term financial commitment?
- Be prepared to work with minimal support.
- Focus on who you are there to help - and stay focused.
- Think about work commitments at home. Can urgent ones be adequately covered?
- If you enjoy working to a broad agenda, can live on your wits, are prepared to work long hours and think on your feet, give it a try.
- You won't forget the experience in a hurry!

Mission Accomplished?

- Arvid arrived first. Logically, he was the first to leave, after just over 2 weeks in attendance.
- I personally saw the TK80s out to the wreck site, before departing. Apart from final stripping of tanks; cargo and other pollutants, with the exception of 200 tonnes of HFO, necessary for maintaining the after section's stability, had been removed.
- Personnel to relieve us could not be found by IMO. Expertise in legal matters and to advise on wreck removal was needed.
- We were both exhausted. If we were unable to offer a total commitment and had to contemplate rest days, then our usefulness was over.
- We had to think about our normal jobs in Norway and the UK.
- We both felt a little guilty. Complex problems remained and both KPT and salvors were sorry to see us depart.
- Who were we really there for?

The people of Karachi



And Finally

It was time to go home and...

Walk the dog!

