

Testimony of  
**Lt. Gen. Thomas G. McInerney**

July 27, 2010

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
BY  
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JULY 27, 2010

CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE JUDICIARY

IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY AND

TESTIFY ABOUT DOD LESSONS LEARNED AS THE DOD COORDINATOR

DURING THE EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL FROM 24 MARCH TO 15 SEPTEMBER 1989

IN PRINCE WILIAM SOUND, ALASKA WHILE I WAS THE COMMANDER OF ALASKAN  
COMMAND.

THE US GOVERNMENT HAS REORGANIZED SIGNIFICANTLY WITH THE CREATION  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECUTIY (DHS) AND THE CREATION OF  
NOTHERN COMMAND (NORTHCOM) WITHIN DOD, AND THESE CHANGES ARE ALL  
POSITIVE WITH RESPECT TO MY COMMENTS TODAY.

A QUICK REFRESH FOR THE COMMITTEE ON THE DOD ASSETS PROVIDED MAY BE  
USEFUL. OUR INITIAL SUPPORT WAS AN IMPROVISED COMMAND AND CONTROL  
SYSTEM CALLED OASIS (OIL AREA SURVEILANCE INFORMATION SYSTEM) THAT  
PROVIDED THE ON SCENE COAST GUARD COORDINATOR, VICE ADMIRAL CLYDE  
ROBBINS AND THE EXXON COORDINATOR WITH A VISUAL DIGITAL MAP  
DISPLAY OF THE OIL SPILL LOCATION, BEACHES AND OTHER OIL COVERED  
AREAS, SENSITIVE ENVIORNMENT AND WILDLIFE AREAS. IN ADDITION, THE  
USN PROVIDED TWO AMPHIBOUS SHIPS, JUNEAU AND MCHENRY, FOR USE AS

BOATELS TO HOUSE THE 11,000 WORKERS WHO EVENTUALLY WORKED IN THE AREA UNTIL EXXON COULD PROVIDE SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED BARGES TO HOUSE THEM.

WHAT WE DID NOT PROVIDE WAS MANPOWER TO CLEAN UP THE BEACHES WHICH BECAME A VERY CONTENTIOUS ISSUE WITH SENATORS STEVENS AND MURKOWSKI WHOM FELT THE 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION SHOULD HELP. I WAS STRONGLY OPPOSED AND PRESIDENT BUSH MADE THE FINAL DECISION WITH SUPPORT FROM SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CHENEY TO NOT USE SOLDIERS FOR THE CLEAN UP OPERATIONS. INSTEAD EXXON HIRED LOCAL WORKERS (THE UNEMPLOYMENT AT THAT TIME WAS 8% IN ALASKA) WHICH PROVED TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL AND I BELIEVE A PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE CLEAN UP OPERATIONS. THE MILITARY SHOULD NOT DO WHAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN DO EQUALLY AS WELL OR BETTER. I SENSE THAT THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE GUIDANCE IN THE GULF TODAY.

I WILL NOW OUTLINE WHAT I THINK WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED FOR MILITARY SUPPORT TO OIL CLEAN UP OPERATIONS BASED ON THIS EXPERIENCE:

1. DOD, NOW NORTHCOM, SHOULD BE PART OF ANY INITIAL TASK FORCE ESTABLISHED BY DHS, STATES, LOCAL COUNTIES AND THE OIL COMPANY RESPONSIBLE. RAPID FORMATION IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS.
2. A JOINT FORCE COMMANDER SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO SUPPORT THE ON SCENE COAST GUARD COORDINATOR IMMEDIATELY. HE AND HIS STAFF SHOULD HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE TO PROVIDE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY APPROPRIATE TO SUPPORT HIM SUCH AS IMAGERY FROM SATELLITES OR UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES (UAV'S), OR MANNED AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE

AND SURVEILLANCE SUCH AS THE U-2 WITH ITS UNIQUE SPECTRIAL IMAGERY. THESE NEW TECHNOLOGIES SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY DEPLOYED TO GIVE THE NATIONAL COMMAND AUTHORITIES AND ALL APPROPRIATE AGENCIES INVOLVED THE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS (SA) THAT WILL ENABLE SWIFT IDENTIFICATION OF COMMON CLEAN UP OBJECTIVES. I CAN NOT EMPHASIZE THIS ENOUGH.

3. THE DOMINANT RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OIL COMPANY'S VERSUS THE USG WAS ESTABLISHED FOR CLEAN UP, I BELIEVE, AFTER THE EXXON VALDEZ DISASTER AND THEREFORE I FEEL IT IS PARAMONT THAT SOLDIERS NOT BE USED FOR THESE MANUAL OPERATIONS. I DO NOT OBJECT IF SPECIALLY EQUIPPED NAVY SHIPS ARE USED AS WE DID IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND OR IF THE NAVY HAS SPECIALLY EQUIPPED SKIMMERS TO ASSIST. I FEEL THAT THESE DISASTERS IMPACT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY SO SEVERLY THAT THE LOCAL POPULATION SHOULD BENEFIT FROM THE TEMPORARY JOB CREATION AND FOR PROTECTION OF THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT. I AM TROUBLED BY THE MORATORIUM ON CONTINUED DRILLING IN THE GULF AS IT RUNS COUNTER TO THE GUIDANCE WE USED IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND (PWS) IN KEEPING THE TANKERS FLOWING OUT OF PWS. CONTINUED SAFE OIL PRODUCTION OPERATIONS ARE VITAL TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY.

4. I MENTIONED EARLIER THE OASIS COMMAND SYSTEM THAT WAS IMMEDIATELY ESTABLISHED AS A COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEM FOR CLEAN UP OPERATIONS. THIS WAS ADAPTED FROM MY JOINT COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEM AND GAVE ALL PLAYERS AN EXCELLENT SA TOOL, TO INCLUDE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION SAM SKINNER AND THE COAST GUARD

COMMANDANT ADMIRAL YOST, NEAR REAL TIME KNOWLEDGE ON HOW THE OPERATIONS WERE GOING FROM THEIR OFFICES IN WASHINGTON. EVERYBODY KNEW WHERE THE PRIMARY SLICKS WERE, WHAT BEACHES AND SENSITIVE AREAS WERE FOULED WITH OIL, HOW MANY SHIPS AND CREWS WERE WORKING THE BEACHES ETC.

THIS WAS OF GREAT VALUE FOR ALL ESPECIALLY THE EXXON ON SCENE COORDINATOR, ALONG WITH HIS CG COMMANDER. HOWEVER, ONCE THE EXXON LAWYERS DISCOVERED THAT EXXON WAS FUNDING THIS NEAR REAL TIME INFORMATION, THEY TERMINATED THIS VALUABLE TOOL FOR FEAR THAT USG WOULD HAVE TOO MUCH INFO FOR LATER LEGAL BATTLES. WE SHOULD NOT HAVE NOT LET THIS HAPPEN BUT THIS ADVANCE COMMAND AND CONTROL CAPABILITY WAS NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD AT THE TIME AND THERE WERE TOO MANY OTHER WIND MILLS TO FIGHT.

WITH REFERENCE TO THE CURRENT OIL SPILL IN THE GULF AND THE RELEVENCY OF THE EXXON VALDEZ EXPERIENCE, I WOULD ONLY SAY THAT THE LAWS AND PROTOCOLS WERE CHANGED AND ARE IN FORCE TODAY WHICH HAS ENABLED SECRETARY NAPOLITANO AND ADMIRAL THAD ALLEN TO WORK VERY EFFECTIVELY WITH BP. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THIS OIL SPILL IS FAR MORE CHALLENGING WITH RESPECT TO THE SOURCE FROM A SURGING WELL 5,000 FEET BELOW SEA LEVEL. AT THE SAME TIME THE GULF IS NOT NEARLY AS REMOTE AND SUPPORT ASSETS ARE FAR MORE READILY AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT THE OIL SPILL TASK FORCE. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PLUS. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE HAVE NOT USED ALL OUR LATEST IMAGERY ASSETS SUCH AS UAV'S LIKE GLOBAL HAWK OR REAPERS AND U-2 AIRCRAFT. I WOULD DO A TEST IMMEDIATELY TO DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE OF CONTINUOUS DIGITAL RADAR

(SAR), INFARED AND ELECTRO OPTICAL DISPLAYS THAT WILL SHOW THE COORDINATORS THE EXACT POSITIONING OF THE OIL SLICKS, LOCATION OF THE OVER 1,000 SHIPS SUPPORTING HIM, FOULED BEACHES AND SENSITIVE AREAS ETC. THIS REAL TIME DIGITAL PICTURE WILL BE OF IMMENSE VALUE I BELIEVE AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR USE BY DHS IN ALL FUTURE DISASTER AREAS.

WE MUST DEVELOP THE PROCEDURES TO KEEP UP THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNORS' SITUATIONAL AWARENESS. TODAY WE GIVE OUR BATTLE FIELD COMMANDERS THIS CAPABILITY BUT NOT OUR LEADERSHIP IN CONUS. SATELLITES ARE HELPFUL BUT NOT CONTINUOUSLY REAL TIME.

IN SUMMARY, MADAME CHAIRMAN, I BELIEVE MOST OF THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM DOD'S EXPERIENCE IN THE EXXON VALDEZ DISASTER HAVE BEEN INCORPORATED IN THE GULF TODAY WITH THE EXCEPTION OF NEAR REAL TIME IMAGERY FOR COMMAND AND CONTROL FROM MODERN UAVS, AND THE MORATORIUM ON OIL PRODUCTION.