

## Notes from Dr. Ian Ralby's (Auxilium Worldwide) Intervention – DCoC Oil Spill Preparation in Red Sea

- This is an inter-generational problem.
- Comparisons are helpful but big versus bigger is tough to understand (EXXON VALDEZ was 250,000 barrels while SOUNION is almost four times as much at 990,000).
  - A more useful comparison is the spill of the WAKASHIO – it was 7,000 barrels – less than 1% of what is at stake here.
- After having dealt with the Houthis and a potential catastrophic oil spill from the FSO SAFER for 5 years, this is a nightmare of déjà vu. Lessons from that experience are relevant here.
  - The Houthis neither understand nor care about the maritime domain. They have long shown a flagrant disregard for human life, so it is unsurprising that they have no regard for the marine environment of the welfare of those who live and work on it.
  - They also very reliably untrustworthy. They have not abided by any agreements they have made in the last decade, so it would be unlikely for them to stick to any agreement now without doing something to create more problems.
  - Additionally, they will cut off their own limbs if they think it will make the West, the UN, the US, the UK or Israel look bad. They care more about making others look bad than doing something that would be in their obvious best interest.
  - In that vein, they may actually want a spill – there is no cohesive decision making in the Houthi leadership and it already appears that there is a split between those who recognize that it may be in their interests to allow for this situation to be resolved and provide the appearance of benevolence versus those who think it is in their interests to see the catastrophic spill, thereby signaling the severity of their hostility... additionally, they had previously thought that they could negotiate a percentage of kickback on the \$20-27 billion in immediate clean-up costs.
- This is terrible for the marine environment but it is an even bigger humanitarian concern. Depending on where and when the spill occurs – if it does occur – it will not only destroy the marine environment, it will also shut down the desalination plants on which 35 million people rely for their drinking water. What is on the ship is heavy crude which will float initially and then sink and will mix down the water column, interfering with all the different types of desalination plants. There is a 3 day lead supply on that drinking water, and even if there was neither a security nor environmental barrier to ships in the region, it would be all but impossible to make up for that loss of supply, precipitating a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.
- The navigational problem is also huge, as a 900,000 spill will impede freedom of navigation considerably. As we are in the summer cycle of the Red Sea, a spill will head to the Bab al Mandeb and pool, effectively blocking the entrance to the

Sea. Ships will not go through the oil slick as ports and the Suez Canal Authority will not let the vessels enter, dragging oil with them. This will hurt the remaining trade in the Red Sea.

- That will also be a huge regional challenge for the Western Indian Ocean and Cape of Good Hope. Right now, there is a 51-71 % decrease in Red Sea traffic, but if the remaining 29-49% diverting down the African coast will significantly overburden the already overburdened ports and infrastructure of the region. We have seen groundings and container loss in South Africa, and more of that, plus other issues are almost certain with the added traffic.
- And with that comes a very serious security concern for the Western Indian Ocean Region. Without targets in the Red Sea, the Houthis may expand their attacks in the Indian Ocean and with a range of 3,000 km, they are certainly capable of doing that, and may cause further loss of life and environmental pollution in the process, putting a real challenge on the RMSA and DCoC states.
- We also have new evidence that the Houthis are coordinating with groups in Africa, particularly Al Shabab (with whom they have worked for years). That spells potential trouble, as maritime attacks have been the key to Houthi prominence this past year and may be the source of inspiration for African terrorist and militant groups – old and even new. This could significantly threaten Africa's maritime security and sits at the heart of the DCoC and RMSA constructs and purpose.
- In addition to the humanitarian, economic and security concerns, the marine environmental matters are what make this intergenerational. A 900,000 barrel spill will kill off 10 unique species of fish, and destroy the only coral system in the world that is impervious to sea temperature rise. It will destroy the fishing economies of the coastal states for a generation, and will perpetrate long-term harm on coastal tourism. Add in the looming possibility of the 22,000 tons of ammonium phosphate sulphate on the RUBY MAR and the 70 mile radius algae bloom that will result, and the Houthis may turn the Red Sea into a dead sea.
- We cannot wait to see how bad this gets. That is a lesson we should have learned from the WAKASHIP and the Beirut Blast. The time to act is now, and every lever must be pulled to create an opportunity for a salvage operation to occur. The whole world will suffer if we do not prevent this disaster.