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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00	DINT-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	ITCE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	EB-00	EXME-00
	E-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	NSF-01	OES-01	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00
	T-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00
	SAS-00	/012W					

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R 312052Z OCT 00
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7161
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
CIMS NTDB WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LIMA 006495

STATE FOR WHA, EB, AND OES
COMMERCE FOR 4331/MAC/WH/OLA/SCOTT SMITH
DEPT PASS INT/USGS/RESTON FOR AGURMENDI
DEPT PASS TDA FOR AANGULO

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DEPT PASS OPIC FOR J BRACHE
DEPT PASS EXIM FOR DON HULTMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ECON, SENV, EPET, KTDB, PE
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON OIL SPILL IN AMAZON TRIBUTARY

REF: LIMA 6062

1. SUMMARY. THE PARTIAL SINKING OF A BARGE CHARTERED BY PLUSPETROL IN THE MARANON RIVER ON OCTOBER 3 SPILLED CRUDE OIL IN THIS TRIBUTARY TO THE AMAZON RIVER (REFTEL). THE EMBASSY HAS SINCE LEARNED THAT ABOUT 5,500 BARRELS OF HEAVY CRUDE OIL WAS SPILLED AND THAT THIS STRETCH OF THE MARANON RIVER IS THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF PERU'S LARGEST NATIONAL

RESERVE AND THE SECOND LARGEST IN THE AMAZON RIVER BASIN. THERE HAVE BEEN INITIAL REPORTS OF CONTAMINATED FISHERIES, CROPS, AND WATER SUPPLIES AFFECTING SOME 20,000 RESIDENTS. POTENTIAL LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE REMAINS TO BE FULLY ASSESSED. PLUSPETROL HAS DISPUTED THE GOP'S FINE OF NEARLY USD 500 THOUSAND. END SUMMARY.

5,500 BARRELS SPILLED AT EDGE OF PERU'S LARGEST RESERVE

2. ON OCTOBER 3, A PLUSPETROL BARGE (LEASED FROM THE PERUVIAN NAVY) PARTIALLY SANK NEAR THIS ARGENTINE FIRM'S SARAMURO TERMINAL ALONG THE MARANON RIVER, SPILLING APPROXIMATELY 5,500 BARRELS OF HEAVY CRUDE OIL INTO THIS AMAZON RIVER TRIBUTARY. (PLUSPETROL LEADS THE CONSORTIUM THAT WAS RECENTLY AWARDED THE CONCESSION TO DEVELOP PERU'S
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CAMISEA NATURAL GAS FIELD.)

3. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY CONTACTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND MINES (MEM), THE BARGE BEGAN TAKING ON WATER IN ONE OF ITS AIR CHAMBERS, CAUSING IT TO SINK ALMOST COMPLETELY. (A PLUSPETROL EXECUTIVE TOLD US THAT THE INITIAL CAUSE OF THE INTAKE OF WATER HAS NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED.) FAILING IN ITS INITIAL EFFORTS TO REFLOAT THE VESSEL, PLUSPETROL DEPLOYED 50-FOOT LONG BOOMS AROUND THE SUNKEN VESSEL IN AN EFFORT TO CONTAIN THE SPILL AND HIRED ABOUT 120 PEOPLE FROM THE AREA FOR CLEAN-UP EFFORTS. THE FIRM ALSO BROUGHT IN FOODSTUFFS, WATER SUPPLIES, AND MEDICAL PERSONNEL TO ASSIST HEALTH MINISTRY STAFF IN RESPONDING TO POSSIBLE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS.

4. THE MARANON RIVER REPRESENTS THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF THE PACAYA-SAMIRIA NATIONAL RESERVE LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF THE PERUVIAN AMAZON. OVER 2 MILLION HECTARES IN SIZE, IT CONTAINS A RICH DIVERSITY OF FLORA AND FAUNA, AND IS BY FAR PERU'S LARGEST NATIONAL RESERVE (ABOUT 2-1/2 TIMES THE COMBINED ACREAGE OF PERU'S SEVEN OTHER NATIONAL RESERVES). IT IS THE SECOND LARGEST RESERVE IN THE ENTIRE AMAZON BASIN. THE PERUVIAN AMAZON RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IIAP) REPORTED THAT THE ACCIDENT OCCURRED WITHIN THE RESERVE.

5. WITHIN THREE TO FOUR DAYS OF THE ACCIDENT, SCIENTISTS FROM IIAP AND THE NATIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE (INRENA) FOUND THAT THE CONTAMINATION CAUSED BY THE SPILL EXTENDED SOME 150 KILOMETERS DOWNSTREAM ALONG THE RIVER, REPRESENTING ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE PACAYA-SAMIRIA RESERVE'S NORTHERN BOUNDARY. IIAP FOUND CONTAMINATION AT

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LEVELS OF UP TO FIVE AND A HALF TIMES MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE
LEVELS FOR OIL-BASED SUBSTANCES. IIAP ALSO OBSERVED THAT
PLUSPETROL'S CLEAN-UP EFFORTS APPEARED TO BE LARGELY
RUDIMENTARY.

6. APPROXIMATELY 20,000 RESIDENTS IN 86 COMMUNITIES DEPEND
ON THE RIVER FOR ITS FISHERIES AND WATER SUPPLY. ALTHOUGH
THE FULL EXTENT OF THE SPILL'S ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE HAS NOT
BEEN DETERMINED, AUTHORITIES WORRY ABOUT ADVERSE IMPACTS ON
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE. AREA RESIDENTS COMPLAIN THAT
PLUSPETROL'S EFFORTS TO PROVIDE WATER SUPPLIES FAIL TO
COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF WATER FROM THE RIVER. THE MEM
ALSO REPORTED THAT VARIOUS RICE PADDIES IN THE REGION HAVE
BEEN CONTAMINATED. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE OIL SLICK HAS BEEN
DISPERSED WITHIN THE RIVER'S MAIN CHANNEL, OIL DEPOSITS ON
EXPOSED SANDBARS AND VEGETATION ALONG THE RIVERBANK COULD
RESULT IN LONGER LASTING CONSEQUENCES. IIAP IS CONCERNED
THAT THE COMBINATION OF INCOMPLETE CLEAN-UP EFFORTS AND
RISING WATER LEVELS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ONCOMING RAINY
SEASON COULD PUSH THE CONTAMINATION EVEN FARTHER INTO
ADJOINING HABITAT.

PLUSPETROL DISPUTES GOP FINE OF NEARLY USD 500K

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INR-00 IO-00 ITC-01 L-00 VCE-00 AC-01 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 NSF-01 OES-01 OIC-02 OMB-01 OPIC-01 PM-00
PRS-00 ACE-00 SP-00 SSO-00 SS-00 STR-00 TRSE-00
T-00 USIE-00 EPAE-00 PMB-00 DRL-02 G-00 NFAT-00
SAS-00 /012W

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AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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7. ON OCTOBER 18 PERU'S ENERGY REGULATORY BODY, OSINERG, ORDERED PLUSPETROL TO PAY A FINE OF ABOUT USD 497 THOUSAND WITHIN 30 DAYS. PLUSPETROL HAS CHALLENGED THE FINE, ARGUING THAT THE CAUSES OF THE ACCIDENT AND THE ASSOCIATED ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES HAVE YET TO BE FULLY DETERMINED. THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE SITUATION AND REPORT ON SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS.

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