



IMCO

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
MARINE POLLUTION, 1973
Committee II
Agenda item 2

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT TEXT OF ANNEX I OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE PREVENTION OF
POLLUTION FROM SHIPS, 1973

Proposal for an additional Special Area

Submitted by the Imperial Government of Iran

The Persian Gulf is about 900 km in length and has an area of nearly 200,000 sq.km. It is connected to oceanic waters by the U-shaped Strait of Hormuz which is, at the narrowest part, about 50 km. wide.

The Gulf is shallow; over the Pearl Banks, which lie off the flat shores of the Arabian States and cover nearly one-third of the total area, the depth does not exceed 15 fathoms (27 m) while off the mountainous shores of Iran depths of the order of 40 fathoms (73 m) are usual. In a few places to the eastward of the Qatar Peninsula depths of 50 to 60 fathoms (91 to 109 m) occur.

The range of tides within this Gulf is very variable and depends to a large extent upon the declination of the Moon; in general it can be said that it seldom exceeds 1.75 m at any place under ordinary circumstances but may increase to 3.0 m under extreme meteorological conditions at the eastern end.

Fresh water is received from the rivers Karun, Tigris and Euphrates which discharge together into the head of the Gulf. There are also several small rivers on the Iranian coast, but their flow is inconsiderable. There are no streams of any consequence on the coasts of the Arabian States.

The evidence that the predominant flow of water through the Strait of Hormuz is westwards for most of the year and the fact that the water near the head of the Gulf is much more saline than the water of the ocean both show that the fresh water inflow is insufficient to counterbalance the losses by evaporation and that there is no purging of the Gulf except at times when the rivers are in flood and the flow through the Strait of Hormuz becomes dominantly eastwards.

The waters of the Persian Gulf are rich in marine life; fish and crustacea abound and the fishing industry provides the essential protein for the numerous inhabitants of the surrounding States as well as the famous 'Gulf Shrimp' for export. The pearl fishing industry, though no longer so great in volume as in former years, is still of considerable economic importance to the area.

Fishing is also of great economic importance in the Gulf of Oman, where it is at times seriously hindered by the presence of large oil slicks along the shores.

The transport of oil is by far the largest item of sea traffic in the Gulf. The oil-wells in the surrounding countries and in the seabed produced, in December 1972, a daily total of 19½ million barrels (2.9 million tons) of crude oil. About one-tenth of this enormous quantity was either consumed locally or exported elsewhere by pipeline and the remaining 90% (either in the form of crude oil or refined products) required the services of 25 to 30 large tankers daily, the average cargo of each exceeding 100,000 tons. This traffic, which has continued to expand, comprises more than one-half of the world's total production of crude oil.

The entire seabed of the Gulf lies at a depth of less than 100 fathoms and is therefore considered to form part of the Continental Shelf. The various coastal States have accordingly granted licences for the exploration and exploitation of its resources and, as a result, a large number of oil-wells have been drilled over much of its area. From the 300/400 wells now in operation the crude oil is conveyed first to an 'operations platform' and thence to a terminal, situated either on land or at sea, for export. About one-tenth of the total production of crude oil in the Gulf comes from these sea-wells; some of the oil-fields have been proved to extend across the boundaries of the jurisdiction of neighbouring or facing States.

In order to safeguard the ecology of the whole area it is desirable to designate the Persian Gulf, together with so much of the Gulf of Oman as lies westward of longitude 60°00' East, as a Special Area in which, in accordance with Regulations 9(1)(a)(iii) and 9(1)(a)(iv), no ship, other than those of very small gross tonnage, may discharge any oil or oily mixture. The term 'ship' includes all platforms used in connexion with exploitation of the resources of the sea-bed.

Before defining the provisions to be applied to this Special Area in accordance with Regulation 12(1)(c) it is necessary to consider what it is desired to achieve in the Mediterranean and for which Regulation 12(2) has been formulated, and how these aims may differ from what is desired to safeguard the Persian Gulf.

In the Mediterranean there are crude oil and refined products loading terminals in five coastal States (Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Libya) and there are reception terminals in all other States around the seaboard. Some of the crude oil is loaded into large tankers for trans-ocean delivery but part of it and nearly all of the black oil products are destined for other Mediterranean ports and are carried there by smaller tankers, many of which are engaged on a shuttle service across the Mediterranean and in consequence seldom have the opportunity, while on the return journey to the loading terminals, effectively to operate Retention-on-Board routines. It is therefore of importance that adequate reception and disposal facilities should be provided at loading terminals to prevent the discharge of tank washings, residues and dirty ballast into the Mediterranean. At present there are not any submarine oil-wells in this area

In the Persian Gulf the situation is entirely different and other provisions are required. At the crude oil loading terminals, which may be at ports, on sea-islands or many miles offshore, nearly all of the incoming tankers have come from distant ports, cleaned their tanks en route, transferred the residues to slop-tanks and discharge only clean ballast while loading; there is therefore no need to provide reception facilities for them. There will, however, always be a number of tankers returning from ports in the Indian Ocean which may not have completed tank cleaning before arrival and it is proposed that reception facilities on a scale sufficient for the

requirements of this part only of the trade should be provided at selected terminals in ports but not at any of the sea-islands or offshore terminals. Reception and disposal facilities will also be required at all product loading terminals to enable tankers, which have previously carried black oils, to discharge all dirty ballast and residues ashore before loading with white oil products. At the numerous platforms used in connexion with the extraction of oil from the sea-bed the operators should be required to provide, maintain and operate reception and disposal facilities adequate for the prevention of the discharge from their installations of any oil or oily mixtures into the sea.

In view of these requirements it is proposed that in Regulation 12 of Annex I, paragraph (1) shall be amended and an additional paragraph (4) added, as follows:

Para (1)(a) add 'Persian Gulf & Gulf of Oman westwards of longitude 60°00' East.

Para (4) - additional - to read:

(4) Persian Gulf & Gulf of Oman westwards of longitude 60°00' East

The prevention of oil pollution by tankers and from fixed or floating platforms in the Persian Gulf and the western part of the Gulf of Oman will be effected as follows:

- (a) oil tankers while operating westwards of longitude 60°00' East in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, shall retain on board all oil drainage and sludge, dirty ballast and tank washing waters and
 - (i) if proceeding to repair ports or requiring to clean tanks immediately prior to loading petroleum products, shall discharge them only to shore reception facilities to be provided at appropriate places by Contracting Governments
 - (ii) if proceeding to crude oil loading terminals, shall retain them on board until after they have left the Special Area, unless, when loading at a terminal in a port, they make use of such reception facilities as may be available there.

- (b) Each Contracting Government shall provide, not later than [1 January 1977] at each repair port, each petroleum products loading terminal and such crude oil loading terminals in ports as they shall select, facilities adequate for the reception and treatment of dirty ballast and tank washing waters from tankers using those installations.
- (c) Operators of fixed and floating platforms used in connexion with the extraction of oil from the sea-bed within the Special Area, shall provide, maintain and operate apparatus sufficient in capacity and designed to prevent the escape of any oil or oily mixtures from their installations.
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