

CURRENT DOCUMENTS

Impact of IXTOC I Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico and on the Coast of Texas: Joint Hearings Before the House Comm. on Merchant Marine and Fisheries and Subcomm. on Water Resources of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 96th Cong., 1st Sess. (1979) (statements of Günther Handl and Jordan J. Paust).

BACKGROUND

On June 3, 1979, the IXTOC I offshore oil well in the Bay of Campeche, Mexico, blew out. To date, more than 112 million gallons of oil, at a rate of 425,000 gallons per day, has been spilling into the Gulf of Mexico. Attempts to cap the runaway well have been unsuccessful, although recent efforts by the Mexican National Petroleum Company (PEMEX) have shown some success in reducing the flow. The IXTOC I well blowout has resulted in the world's worst oil spill, adversely affecting the coastline from the Bay of Campeche, Mexico, to the northern edge of Padre Island, Texas.

Economic losses from the IXTOC I spill include PEMEX's loss of US\$70 million in oil supplies in addition to PEMEX's daily expenditure of US\$340,000 in its efforts to control the well. It is estimated that the tourist and fishing industries of South Texas have lost over \$400 million dollars.

Several legal actions have been initiated in order to obtain compensation for these losses. The legal actions thus far have included international negotiations, lawsuits, and a proposed bill before the United States Congress to provide \$80 million in aid. The following statements were presented as testimony at joint hearings held by the United States House of Representatives Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries and Subcommittee on Water Resources of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation on September 8-9, 1979 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The commentaries address the complex international legal problems involved in ascertaining Mexican liability and in obtaining jurisdiction over PEMEX in order to press claims in United States Courts for losses caused by the blowout and resulting oil spill.