

# Oil tanker breaks apart, sinks off Spain

Seth Borenstein and Daniel Rubin  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

**SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, Spain** — As a crippled tanker full of about 20 million gallons of gooey fuel oil split in two and sank two miles beneath the seething Atlantic's surface Tuesday, experts feared the worst: Oil bubbling back to the surface to befoul Spanish and Portuguese shorelines, their fish and wildlife, and maybe even Mediterranean beaches.

Stormy conditions — which broke

up the crippled tanker Prestige 150 miles off Spain's northwestern coast — along with the unusual thickness of the oil and extreme pressure on the ocean floor, threaten the worst oil spill in more than a decade, said the U.S. government's top oil spill response official.

About 1 million gallons of oil spilled instantly when the ship broke in two, spawning an oil slick of about 2,200 square miles — about twice the size of Rhode Island. Some Spanish beaches already are mired in oil from a spill last

week, their sea birds covered in sludge. Fishing, a key industry, has shut down in vicinity of the port of La Coruna, about 370 miles northwest of Madrid.

The aging single-hulled tanker carried more than twice the oil that the Exxon Valdez spilled in Alaska in 1989, but nowhere near 88 million gallons that despoiled Trinidad and Tobago in 1979.

So far, most of the oil remains in Prestige's tanks in more than 11,000 feet of water and under about 5,000 pounds of pressure per square inch.

The best possible scenario is that the tanks are so full they can't buckle and their oil remains buried on the sea bottom or dribbles out slowly for years through tiny cracks. Experts fear the tanks will implode and send millions of gallons of fuel oil, which is slightly lighter than water, back to the surface.

Once the oil gets to the surface, "you can't do any type of clean-up," said David Kennedy, director of the U.S. National Ocean Service's Office of Response and Restoration. That's be-

cause the usual oil spill-fighting methods — burning the oil slick or dispersing it with soapy detergent — won't work against thick fuel oil in heavy seas and 45 mph winds.

Kennedy predicted the slick would hit the Portuguese coast harder than the Spanish coast, then flow through the Strait of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean Sea.

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# Senate approves homeland security department

James Kuhnhehn  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

**WASHINGTON** — The Senate overwhelmingly approved the biggest reorganization of the federal government in 55 years Tuesday, sending President Bush legislation to create a homeland security department that combines an array of disparate federal agencies in the name of combating terrorism.

The 90-9 vote came after the White House and Republican congressional leaders thwarted a last-ditch effort by Democrats to remove what they said were corporate special interest provisions in the bill. The House of Representatives had al-

ready passed the legislation and any changes could have doomed passage this year.

The new department will bring under one roof 22 agencies and 170,000 employees, ranging from the Coast Guard to the Secret Service, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to the bureau Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. It will provide a centralized clearinghouse for intelligence data and it will be the new home to the government's stressed immigration and border patrol agencies.

Bush congratulated Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott on Tuesday in a phone call from Air Force One en route to Prague for a

NATO meeting. "We're making great progress in the war on terror; part of that progress will be the ability for us to protect the American people at home," Bush told Lott and other senators listening on speakerphone in Lott's office.

Congress has yet to provide financing for the new department, however. Several senators said that is an obstacle the new Republican-controlled House and Senate will have to confront early next year.

Devising the new department gives Bush a chance to change workplace rules and pay scales under the new measure without having to abide by civil service procedures. Workers could seek

federal mediation, but the administration could ignore the mediator's recommendations.

The legislation creating the department gives airports up to an additional year to meet strict inspection standards for checked baggage. The bill also permits pilots to carry weapons in the cockpit of commercial airplanes. In addition, it expands criminal penalties for computer cyber-attacks, particularly if they cause death or widespread economic disruption, and it contains broad exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act.

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# Haifa Mayor Mitzna wins Labor Party's nomination

Carol Rosenberg  
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

**JERUSALEM** — Hoping to wrest power from the ruling Likud bloc, Israel's left-wing Labor Party on Tuesday

chose a reserve general who favors compromise with the Palestinians as its candidate for prime minister in the January national elections.

"The majority of Israel is seeking a dif-

ferent way. There's no security. There's no economy. There's nothing," said Amram Mitzna, 57, declaring victory close to midnight as votes were still being counted in the Labor Party primary.

The mayor of Haifa, who was making his first bid in national politics, was headed to Tel Aviv to a victory celebration at his party's headquarters.

Early results and exit polls reported

by both major Israeli television stations showed Haifa Mayor Mitzna, a dovish former West Bank commander, resoundingly defeating the more hawkish Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, the present party leader, in a primary.

A Channel 2 exit poll by the polling group Dahaf Institute reported that 57 percent of party members voted for Mitzna, compared with 35 percent for Ben-Eliezer and 8 percent for the third candidate, parliament member Haim Ramon.

Ben-Eliezer congratulated Mitzna in a phone call, and called for party unity.

Mitzna vowed this week to pull Israeli troops and settlers out of the Gaza Strip, and has said he would negotiate with the Palestinians even if violence persists.

Likud Party members will choose between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, 74, and Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, 53, on Nov. 28. Then the real campaigns will begin.

Under Israel's electoral revision, voters no longer elect the prime minister. Instead, the party that receives the most seats in the 120-member parliament, the Knesset, and is seen as most likely to build a ruling coalition gets the opportunity to lead Israel.

Labor, for years Israel's dominant party, has been lagging behind Likud since the 1993 Oslo peace accords with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat broke down in violence. And there is no harmony in the party on Mitzna's proposals to return to negotiations with Arafat, even in the face of suicide bombings, and to unilaterally withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza if the Palestinian talks fail.

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