

# Damaged tanker spills 100,000 gallons of fuel

Staff and wire reports

More than 100,000 gallons of aviation fuel has spilled into Cook Inlet from the damaged Greek tanker Cepheus that ran aground Saturday morning, a Coast Guard spokesman said Wednesday. The Coast Guard earlier had said fuel lost from the tanker was negligible, but Capt. Glenn Haines said more accurate measurements of fuel left in the vessel's tanks indicated the loss was greater.

The tanker, which was pulled free by a tug, has tied up at the Port of Anchorage and still is leaking at an unspecified rate. Haines said efforts to control the spill were being hampered by frigid

temperatures, swift tides and ice-filled, silty waters.

"Nobody likes a spill, but if we're going to have one, this is the best time of year" because of the lack of active wildlife in the area, he said.

An aerial survey Wednesday afternoon showed "a sheening and discharge around the vessel" where it is tied at the port, Haines said. "It doesn't appear to be that much, but it is visible," he said.

He said the survey showed no large concentrations of fuel in open water, but small patches of leaked fuel were visible between Fire Island and Cairn Point.

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## Fuel spilled from Greek tanker more than 100,000 gallons

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Information from the aerial survey will be studied to determine whether cleanup efforts are necessary or the spilled fuel will disperse on its own, Haines said.

He said up to half the spilled fuel has evaporated on its own.

The 535-foot vessel was carrying 209,000 barrels of Jet-A kerosene owned by the Mapco Petroleum Co. The cargo was destined for Butler Aviation.

While the spill has not reached "catastrophic" stages, Haines said the Coast Guard has activated an emergency response procedure that allows the agency to draw on a wide array of equipment and manpower throughout the federal government.

Three members of the Coast Guard Pacific Strike Team already are at work on the spill and more help has been requested, he said.

"They are the Coast Guard's SWAT team, if you

will," he said.

Haines said it has been difficult to obtain a precise measurement of the fuel left in the vessel's tanks because the tanker is rocking and because of damage to the tanks.

He said no decision has been made on how to unload the remaining fuel.

"We're taking it nice and slow, and we want to get it moved off as soon as possible, but we don't want to risk ruining the integrity of the

vessel," he said.

Some of the cargo was pumped from the ship, but the unloading was halted when it appeared the operation was causing more fuel to spill into the water at dockside.

The spilled oil is high-grade jet fuel, a thin product that quickly mixes with water, making it difficult to recover, Haines said.

He said it had not been determined why the Cepheus ran aground.

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## Water conditions end oil spill cleanup

by Pat O'Brien  
Times Writer

Ice-clogged waters and strong currents have made it impossible to retrieve any of the more than 180,000 gallons of jet fuel that gushed from a Greek tanker into Cook Inlet Saturday, state and federal officials said this morning.

If you can't clean it up, you can't clean it up; it's just that simple said Robert Martin, regional director of the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Martin said observers on airborne reconnaissance flights conducted over the past several days have not seen any substantial pools of spilled jet-A fuel oil and that it's assumed the material has been churned into the icy waters.

"As far as our position is concerned, there isn't a heck of a lot that can be done," Martin said.

Despite the amount of fuel spilled, Martin said he and others involved in monitoring the inci-

dent have deemed its environmental impact as minimal.

"This time of year, the type of fuel causes us to be far less concerned" than if this was summer, when large numbers of migrating fish would be swimming into the inlet and when substantial numbers of migratory wildfowl would be present, Martin said.

Also, the thin jet fuel tends to

evaporate quickly, thereby lessening any damage it could do, Martin and others have said.

But any damages the jet fuel might do is in marked contrast to the problems other kinds of oil aboard the Cepheus could do if they escaped into the water.

U.S. Coast Guard members and others worked through the night Thursday and Friday morning to connect a steam gen-

erator in the hull of the ship to heat the thick bunker-C oil that's used to power the ship.

Paul Powers, a spokesman for the Coast Guard, said the agency is anxious to have the 40,000 gallons of ship fuel removed so that globs of it don't leak into the water.

That product — which would not evaporate or dissipate easily — would cause "much higher en-

vironmental damage" than the jet fuel, Powers said.

Observers at dockside can still see the jet fuel running from the ship, Powers said. "It's got a pink color."

While the bunker fuel is being heated, additional jet fuel is being pumped from the rear end of the ship, said Coast Guard Petty Officer Dan Dewell. "That has been successful and it did lower the bow, which it was intended to do," Dewell said.

By dropping the prow of the ship, the Coast Guard hopes to lessen the amount of oil spilling into the water through holes in the hull.

The 535-foot Cepheus ran aground across Cook Inlet from the port of Anchorage about 7 a.m. Saturday and was quickly towed off underwater rocks by a tugboat, which hauled the vessel into port.

Coast Guard officials then said the leakage from the Cepheus was minimal, a statement that was later revised.

## U.S. may stay in Honduras

Associated Press

Washington — Pentagon officials are considering leaving perhaps 1,000 U.S. support troops in Honduras after the end of a current series of exercises in order to be ready for new exercises expected to start in June, Defense Department officials said today.

These officials, who spoke only on condition they remain anonymous, said a final decision has not yet been made by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger on the date for a new round of U.S.-Honduran exercises. But there are indications the exer-

cises will begin in June and will involve fewer than the 5,000 U.S. troops who were in Honduras at the peak of the current round of field exercises, which began last September and are due to end in late February.

There are now about 3,000 U.S. troops in Honduras involved in the Big Pine II exercises.

According to Pentagon officials, Weinberger is considering a proposal to leave in place after the current exercises about 1,000 U.S. military personnel, including engineers, air traffic controllers, medical specialists and civic action teams.

The Anchorage Times

Sunday, January 29, 1984

## Crews work to remove grounded ship's fuel

by Cary Virtue  
Times Writer

By midnight Saturday crews were expected to begin pumping more than 6 million gallons of aviation fuel from the damaged Greek tanker moored at the Port of Anchorage.

Removal of the jet-A aviation fuel from the Cepheus will take about four to five days, Coast Guard spokesman Paul Waters said Saturday.

Crews were to begin pumping the aviation fuel from the ship immediately

after most of the tanker's 40,000 gallons of bunker-C diesel fuel oil had been removed, Waters said.

The Cepheus, a 535-foot tanker, ran aground at Cairn Point about 7 a.m. Jan. 21, spilling more than 180,000 gallons of jet fuel into Cook Inlet. A tugboat pulled the ship free and towed it to the Port of Anchorage.

The tanker was carrying 8.5 million gallons of jet fuel owned by the Mapco Petroleum Co. of Fairbanks. About 1.5 million gallons of aviation fuel was re-

moved from the vessel immediately after the grounding occurred, Coast Guard officials said.

The Coast Guard is expected to hold a hearing within two weeks to investigate why the vessel was grounded while being skippered by harbor pilot Tim Christy.

Fuel has seeped from the ship throughout the week, with patches of fuel spotted for 20 miles between Eagle River and Fire Island.

No cleanup operations are under way

because the aviation fuel has dispersed and become mixed with the sea water and ice in the inlet, Coast Guard officials said.

Federal and state officials said it was unlikely any of the spilled fuel would be retrieved.

Work began Friday night to remove most of the 40,000 gallons of diesel fuel from the tanker, with all but 5,000 gallons of the fuel removed by Saturday afternoon. A small portion of the diesel fuel will be left in the Cepheus because

it cannot be completely pumped dry, Waters said.

Removal of the fuel is being conducted by the ship's owners, but Coast Guard officials are monitoring the operation.

Aviation fuel began gushing out of the ship as soon as the ship ran aground. But it was not until Tuesday that the Coast Guard learned the extent of the problem.