

Navy Region Hawaii Participates in Multi-Agency Oil Spill Drill

Navy, Private Sector, Local Government Exercise Creates Partnering Opportunities

IMAGINE THOUSANDS OF gallons of sticky, smelly, and toxic crude oil heading directly for Waikiki Beach or Ko Olina, killing sea birds, turtles and seals along the way and filling the tropical air with sickening vapors. To prevent such a disaster, Navy Region Hawaii conducted intense training last spring. Dozens of Sailors, Navy civilians and other responders participated in a series of joint multi-agency and private sector field and functional exercises to see if they could stop a simulated catastrophic oil spill such as this in its tracks. These activities were conducted under the National Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (NPREP) to test the Hawaii Area, Navy and Tesoro Corporation Contingency Plans.

Navy Region Hawaii recognized that a joint exercise with Tesoro would fulfill its own triennial exercise requirement for a worst case discharge scenario as well as gain invaluable experience by working with the private sector and other response agencies. Over a year of intense planning culminated in a highly charged series of exercises which included the following events over a two month period:

- Shoreline cleanup assessment training
- Equipment deployment to simulate oil dispersant application
- Aerial observer training
- Open-ocean and near shore spill response equipment deployments
- Advanced and position specific Incident Command System (ICS) training
- One day functional exercise

Several personnel from the Navy Region Hawaii Spill Management Team (SMT) attended a three-day training course on shoreline cleanup assessment that was conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This involved classroom work on the science of oil spills and standardized assessment methodologies. The students then practiced their observational and data-recording skills at two locations along Oahu's shoreline.

The off-shore equipment deployments involved the Navy's Supervisor of Salvage and Diving (SUPSALV) and the

Military Sealift Command vessel USNS NAVAJO (T-ATF 169). The ship was outfitted with the Ocean Buster skimming system and practiced various booming maneuvers and response tactics alongside the private sector response vessel Clean Islands. This was an excellent opportunity for both Navy and private sector responders to work together and become familiar with each other's capabilities. SUPSALV also placed their mobile command and repair shop vans dockside as static displays for the deployment observers.

This off-shore event also served as training for the aerial observers who flew overhead in a chartered helicopter. The aerial observers practiced techniques in following the simulated oil slick, using computerized tracking software, and operating the Clean Islands Council's unique multi-function communications system. Using the software that was connected to a Global Positioning System device, the observers were able to record the complete flight path as well as perform other tasks, such as providing the exact location of the spill and its boundaries, thus presenting the inci-



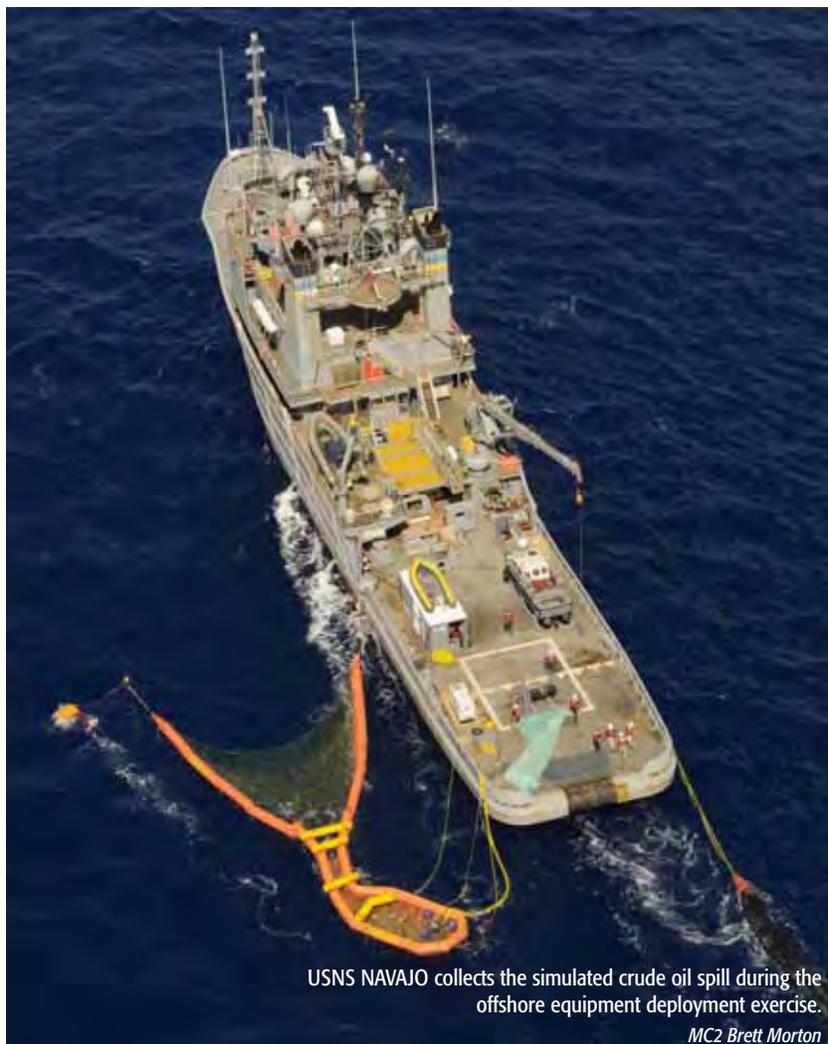
Navy aerial observer trainees receive a safety brief before boarding the helicopter that will take them to the offshore equipment deployment exercise.

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dent command post with a clearer understanding of the spill area of coverage and volume. Three Navy Region Hawaii SMT members participated in this aerial observer training. They joined an elite group of less than a dozen trained oil spill aerial observers in Hawaii.

In addition, a separate equipment deployment exercise was conducted within Pearl Harbor. Vessels from Joint Base Pearl Harbor—Hickam’s Facility Response Team and Clean Islands Council practiced near-shore booming and oil skimming techniques. An on-shore weir skimmer deployment exercise was also conducted at Kilo Pier by Fuel Department personnel from Naval Supply Systems Command Fleet Logistics Center Pearl Harbor.

Navy Region Hawaii drew upon trained individuals from various commands within its area of responsibility to serve in the ICS-based SMT. Team members received extensive training on ICS and oil spill response in the weeks prior to the exercise. Courses included Group and Division



USNS NAVAJO collects the simulated crude oil spill during the offshore equipment deployment exercise.

MC2 Brett Morton

Supervisors, an advanced planning process workshop, Situation and Resource Unit Leaders, Unified Command, Joint Information Center, and Liaison Officer. Training was also conducted on emergency operations center coordination and the relationship with the incident command post.

many other Federal and State agencies worked shoulder to shoulder at the Hawaii Oil Spill Response Center to develop plans, processes and procedures in this worst case discharge scenario.

The first steps were to begin organizing the various ICS sections and

refinery's off-shore mooring, Rear Adm. Dixon Smith, Commander, Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, served as the NOSC, and Dan Carlson of Tesoro served as the Potential Responsible Party. Representing the FOSC was Capt. Joanna Nunan, USCG Captain of

The problem-solving skills of all parties were tested, and issues were quickly resolved based on the wide range of personal experience and organizational procedures represented.

The functional exercise started early in the morning of 14 April 2011 with actual notification calls made to the National Response Center, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Sector Honolulu and others. By 0800, more than 180 people from Navy Region Hawaii, SUPSALV, Tesoro, Clean Islands Council, USCG, State of Hawaii, and

gathering information about the incident. The unified command was quickly established and was composed of the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC), State of Hawaii On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC), Navy On-Scene Coordinator (NOSC) and the Responsible Party. Since the scenario included a Navy vessel and a local

the Port. Curtis Martin from the State of Hawaii Department of Health served as the SOSC.

The joint public and private sector SMT prepared detailed oil recovery and environment protection plans throughout the day using the various contingency plans and ICS procedures. During this



Personnel from the Navy, other federal agencies, and industry partners develop response strategies and environmental protection plans during the functional exercise.

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process, simulated calls to the participants were designed to test the various contingency plans. A press conference and an open house were conducted to provide outreach to the community. The exercise planners and evaluators acted as members of the public and media by raising questions during these events. This also tested the Joint Information Center's capability to create these events on short notice. The functional exercise concluded with the presentation of the incident action plan for the next operational period to the Unified Command.

The participation of the Navy in this exercise with government, community and industry responders provided many benefits. It

allowed personnel from these agencies and organizations to work together in a highly cooperative manner. The problem-solving skills of all parties were tested, and issues were quickly resolved based on the wide range of personal experience and organizational procedures represented. It provided the ability to learn best practices from each other and created strong relationships among the participants. Other Navy activities or regions should strongly consider such joint Navy-industry exercises as a means of increasing their arsenal of knowledge and available response resources. Further, it will enhance the relationship among the Navy and its neighbors by portraying the

Navy as a willing and capable steward of the environment.

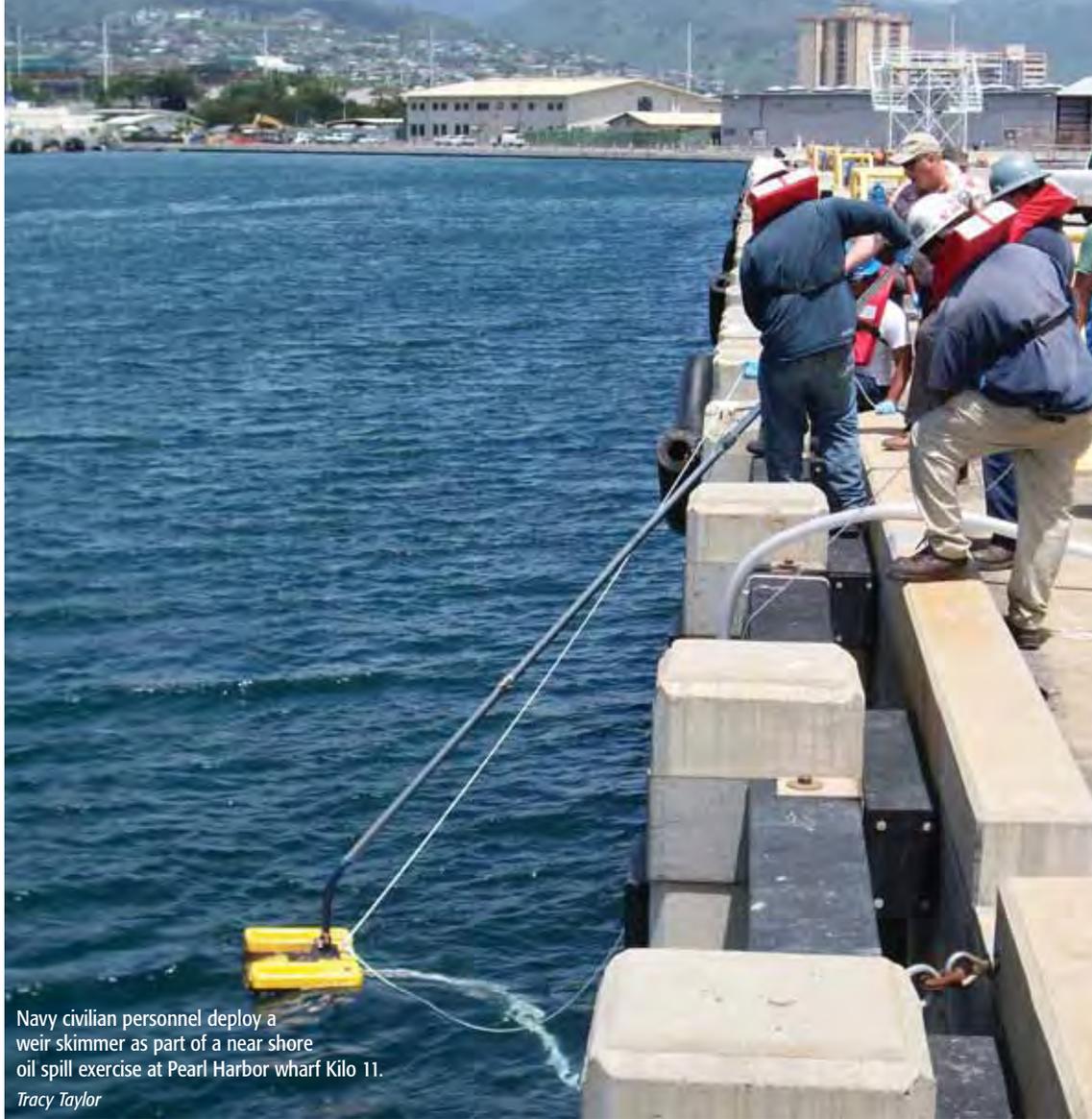
Rear Adm. Smith stated, "We take our responsibility of environmental stewardship seriously. This training with our government and industry partners helps us all work together to protect the beautiful environment here in Hawaii. We learned a great deal about each other's strengths and capabilities. This exercise increased our confidence about the Region's expertise and readiness to respond." CAPT Nunan stated, "The exercise planners did a great job in designing and executing an extremely realistic scenario. I was very impressed by the teamwork of the Federal, State, and industry partners." Mr. Martin said, "Exercises such as this are especially

valuable in training new and old staff members for oil spill response and improving preparedness."

Oil spill prevention and response preparedness are a high priority at Navy Region Hawaii. Thus, a catastrophic spill is unlikely. However, should the unthinkable happen, training and exercises among Navy Region Hawaii and its partners in the local response community will ensure that the response will be timely, effective and well-coordinated. ⚓

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Navy civilian personnel deploy a weir skimmer as part of a near shore oil spill exercise at Pearl Harbor wharf Kilo 11.
Tracy Taylor