

Oil spill a reminder to protect oceans

On Wednesday morning at about 8:30 a.m. the 810-foot container ship Cosco Busan collided with a western

abutment of the Bay Bridge in the San Francisco Bay, spilling an estimated 58,000 gallons of thick and sticky "bunker oil." As

of Friday morning, oil was reported in many parts of San Francisco Bay and outside the bay as far north as Stinson Beach and the southern Sonoma coast; as far west as the Farallon Islands; and as far south as Ocean Beach. Winds have been primarily from the southwest, pushing the slick north.

Today, winds are expected to shift and strengthen and blow from the north-northwest.

Oil is a major threat to the southern sea otter, a threatened species listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska, 200 times the size of this spill, killed thousands of northern sea otters and slimed hundreds of miles of Alaskan coastline. The threatened southern sea otter numbers approximately 3,000 and predominantly ranges between Half Moon Bay and Santa Barbara. Individual and small groups of otters are sometimes seen in San Francisco

Bay, the Farallon Islands, and as far north as Mendocino.

This sad incident will impact the people of San Francisco, the North Coast and the bay's wildlife for days, weeks and perhaps years. Our heart goes out to the people of the bay and Sonoma coast regions.

So far, the sea otter has been lucky; with the oil being pushed to the north, it is missing the heart of the population. We have heard no reports of sea otters being oiled or injured.

There has been extensive modeling of an oil spill's impacts on the sea otter population. A large spill offshore the vicinity of Half Moon Bay is the worst case as winds tend to smear the oil along a long stretch of coastline.

The Cosco Busan spill is small in comparison to the Exxon Valdez, but if winds carry the slick south it will be positioned to impact the otter population. There is no good place for oil on the water. Moving north, it impacts Stinson Beach and Bolinas Lagoon, moving west it impacts the bird breeding rocks of the Farallon Islands, and to the south it will impact sea otters. We are all waiting to see who and what gets slimed next.

Much more can be done to reduce

the impacts of oil spills:

■ The first responder is the contractor for the shipping company; in this case Marine Spill Response, Inc. Shipping companies often choose lowest bidders. Responders must be trained, practiced and have adequate equipment in place. There are many questions about the speed and adequacy of first response in this case.

■ The Coast Guard has a responsibility to assess the spill and the efforts of the first responder. The ship reported a spill of 150-500 gallons. The tear in the Cosco Busan's hull spewing bunker oil was 100 feet long and above waterline.

■ This spill has highlighted slow response, poor capacity and an inability to contain or clean up oil on the water. Less than 10,000 of the 58,000 gallons have been picked up — and the spill occurred in San Francisco Bay with clean up resources on-hand. We need to assess our capacity to clean up a spill on the open ocean or along remote stretches of the California coast.

■ The most catastrophic — and a proven likely scenario — is the collision of two large vessels or tankers. Shipping lanes through the Monterey Bay National Marine

Sanctuary were created in 2000 (I was a member of the implementing group) and there is some evidence that while vessels are transiting further from shore, they are not within the lanes.

■ Recent efforts to create marine reserves are on the mark and can address oil impacts. Reserves provide healthy areas capable of re-populating impacted areas in the event of a catastrophe.

We can take action to protect our coast, ocean, wildlife and sea otters. When an extraordinary disaster like an oil spill happens, marine reserves can act as a safety net. Although some wildlife in some areas may be harmed, at least we can be sure that other reserves, which act like underwater parks, still act as safe havens for wildlife. We can monitor and enforce shipping lanes to minimize the risk of a catastrophic oil spill. And knowing the minutes after the spill offer the best opportunity for containment, we can question and verify shippers — or any polluter — reporting an incident.

Simply put, we must use this spill as a catalyst to reduce our future risks.

Steve Shimek is executive director of The Otter Project, based in Monterey.

Former Mossad chief: Iran needs to change

JERUSALEM — Eyal Weizman, former head of the Israel intelligence agency Mossad, titled his new book "Man in the Shadow"



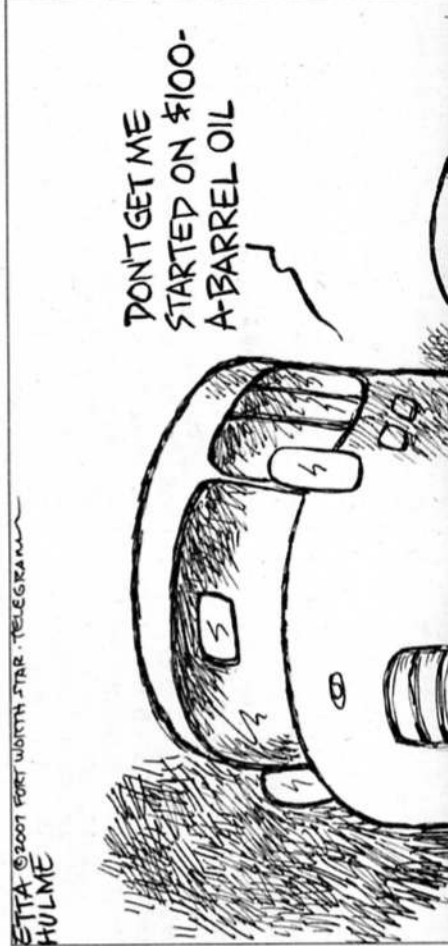
DAVID IGNATIUS
Washington Post

looking for ways to engage in dialogue with these

Halevy is a legend in Israel because of his service as an intelligence director from 1988 to 1994 with Jordan for most of his time and he became so close to Hussein that the two negotiated the 1994 peace agreement. Halevy talks about his diplomacy, he knows what he is doing.

Of course, Halevy is a fictional master spy with thinning hair, wise the ruffled manner might have been a bit another life. And he anonymity.

You would look like he was the man who dared secret missions appeared here with director George Tenet sponsored by the Bin Laden Institution's Saban agreed to sit down for



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As gorno ankles, zitcoms roll out

Eggheaded showbiz types who seriously insist on canning movies *films* are hung up on (or as they would say, "obsessed with") the word *genre*. It's French, pronounced only the French way — *zhahn-ruh* — and



WILLIAM SAFIRE
On Language