

# PETROLEUM IN INDONESIA 2001

## 1. FISHERMEN EMPLOYED TO CLEAN UP OIL SPILL

JAKARTA — Indonesian authorities plan to hire some 500 fishermen in efforts to clean up an oil spill from a tanker which ran aground just south of Singapore, an official said yesterday.

A spokesman for the mayor's office on Batam Island, Riau province, said the fishermen are needed to help fight pollution from the MT Natuna Sea tanker, which hit a reef in the Malacca Strait early this month.

The Panamanian-registered Singaporean-owned tanker, which was carrying 40,400 tons of crude oil to China from Syria, had been trying to avoid a tugboat.

The reef tore a hole in its hull, spilling 7,000 metric tons (2 million gallons) of oil into the waters off Batam, just south of Singapore.

The spokesman said the fishermen's involvement was suggested by the owners of the Natuna Sea at a meeting with Batam Mayor Nazief Susilo Dharma on Tuesday.

He said the cost of the clean-up operation, including the provision of equipment, would be charged to the tanker's owners.

The 500 fishermen would be paid Rp40,000 (US\$4.50) per day. Reports yesterday quoted Dharma as saying the Natuna Sea would not be allowed to leave until the owners had compensated the local population for losses due to the pollution.

Meanwhile in Singaporean waters, authorities kept up efforts to clean up the spill.

Reconnaissance showed "small broken patches of oil in the Eastern Anchorage and Sisters Fairway" as of 7:30 a.m., the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore said in a statement.

Singapore authorities dispatched 37 anti-pollution craft to clean these areas, it said, adding most of Singapore's waters remained generally clear.

The transfer of oil still on board the Natuna Sea to another tanker was expected to be completed by nightfall, the port authority said.

The Natuna Sea ran aground October 3 in Indonesian waters about eight kilometers southeast of Singapore.

None of the 32 people on board, who were from India, the Philippines and Europe, were injured. The ship was en route from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to China.

Beach clean-up operations continued yesterday on islands south of Singapore, including Sentosa, St John's Island and Sisters' Island.

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**Source:** RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 12 –January 2001

## 2. SIX GUNMEN HIJACK, BURN MOBIL OIL BUSES IN ACEH

JAKARTA (IO) — Six gunmen hijacked four buses of a US-owned oil company in restive Aceh province and later set three of them ablaze, police were quoted yesterday by Antara as saying.

Superintendent Abadan Bangko, a local police officer, said the buses belonging to Exxon Mobil Oil Indonesia Inc. were empty except for their drivers, who were allowed to flee unharmed after the attack on Monday.

The hijacked buses were on their way to pick up company staff to take them to work, he said.

Banko said the armed men, suspected of being separatist rebels, set on fire three of the buses and skedaddled in the fourth.

Exxon Mobil Oil Indonesia Inc., owned by Texas-based Exxon Mobil Corp., exports natural gas from Aceh. Its operations are frequently hampered due to clashes between security forces and rebels from the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).

It was the latest violence after Jakarta and GAM leaders prolonged a truce until January 15 in Switzerland on Sunday. More than 100 people have been killed since the ceasefire, which was signed on May 12, came into effect on June 2.

The separatist group has been waging war against Indonesian rule for more than 25 years. More than 5,500 people have perished in the fighting, most of them reportedly killed by Indonesian troops.

In New York, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch warned that the Indonesian government's failure to address the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Aceh will lead to a huge increase in human rights violations.

“Abductions, torture, and unlawful killings are taking place on a daily basis throughout Aceh. Civilian authority has all but collapsed, and no one in Jakarta

seems to be paying serious attention to human rights issues there,” the two organizations said in a press statement picked up by Antara.

“Indonesia’s financial donors already have the problems in East Nusa Tenggara on the agenda for their annual meeting in October; they urgently need to add Aceh,” the statement said.

The two leading international human rights monitoring organizations called for the immediate suspension of any members of the police or military, including commanders, suspected of involvement in, tolerating, or condoning human rights violations. Analysts say the military would suddenly become pretty small if that happened.

The rights groups called for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry, consisting of human rights experts, to investigate recent violations and for suspects to be brought to justice in trials which meet international standards for fairness.

The groups noted that frequent attacks by GAM on Indonesian military and police targets presented legitimate security concerns for the government, but the response of the security forces was counterproductive. “Protecting human rights is an essential prerequisite to finding a durable solution to the conflict in Aceh. The targeting of respected civilians is only going to intensify resentment of central government rule and increase instability,” the statement said.

The two organizations urged both sides to uphold their commitments to protect humanitarian workers and to extend this commitment to ensure human rights protection for all civilians in Aceh.

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