performance of shipboard personnel; with the handling and movement of hazardous cargoes; with administration and enforcement of the Oil Pollution Act of 1961 designed to prevent oil pollution beyond the territorial sea in the so-called "prohibited zone". Navigation and ship control include rules of the nautical road; establishment of sea-lanes and other marine traffic supervision; aids to navigation; radio telephone communications, radar, depth sounders, and other electronic equipment; machinery specifications and safety requirements. Competence of shipboard personnel, examination and licensing, and the requirements for and the adequacy of pilotage all pertain to preventing marine casualties causing pollution. In addition to the Tank Vessel Act, the Coast Guard has a general statutory obligation for review of plans and equipment for other new vessel construction.

Presently there exists no very effective device for the treatment of a persistent oily discharge to create a clean water effluent. Because of oil's very nature, effective pollution control must look towards preventing oil from getting upon the water. Oil discharges from vessels of the magnitude which cause the greatest concern are usually triggered by a marine casualty. The prevention of marine disasters is one of the Coast Guard's primary missions. Because one cannot simply prohibit the transportation of oil over the water, or outlaw collisions and groundings, solution to the problem must be found in those factors which contribute most to a lowering of the risk. Most of the known factors, however, already fall within the existing responsibilities of the Coast Guard.

The grounding several weeks ago of the Liberian tanker, the OCEAN EAGLE, at the entrance of San Juan Harbor with subsequent break-up and discharge of about 2,000,000 gallons of crude oil is the latest vivid reminder of the catastrophic potential of a major oil spill. Coast Guard was promptly on the scene of this marine disaster. The crew was rescued and the safety of the port then became a major consideration. The local Coast Guard commander set in motion a series of contingency actions similar to those developed throughout the Coast Guard as an aftermath of the TORREY CANYON in an attempt to control, abate and eliminate the pollution threat. Participating in the operation were Coast Guard personnel, boats and helicopters. The Department of Interior was notified and the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration and Coast Guard experts were dispatched from Washington to San Juan to advise and assist as appropriate. Using C–130 aircraft, we made repeated flights to and from New York carrying a skimmer craft, floating boom and other materials. At the request of the Coast Guard, the Navy furnished salvage specialists and ships. The Corps of Engineers and the Puerto Rican Government also participated. This experience points up the value and urgency of multi-agency planning and participation in such a casualty, including State and local authorities and industry whenever appropriate. Experience also dictates the need for clear-cut authority for the on-scene commander, immediate implementation of contingency plans and the need for full utilization of existing resources, communications and other tools.

Those provisions of S. 2760, if amended, and H.R. 15906 which deal with clean-up, place the ultimate responsibility for clean-up of the oil with the Secretary of the Interior. Provision is included for the Secretary of the Interior to delegate that authority to other agencies through appropriate agreements. Because of the extensive resource capability of the Coast Guard, distributed geographically as well as the regulatory authority incorporated in H.R. 15906 and S. 2760, if amended, relating also to clean-up procedures, we would expect to enter into long term agreements with Interior to define geographic areas or other appropriate bases where the Coast Guard would exercise the delegated authority for planing, development of the necessary equipment and materials, and for operational direction and on-scene control and coordination of clean-up efforts should an incident occur. The strength of Coast Guard planning and operational capability stems from our intimate knowledge of vessel construction and operation, knowledge of the navigable and ocean waters, long experience in regulating the water transportation of hazardous cargoes, and our handling of vessel casualties including search and rescue operations. Additionally, it would be important to spell out in the agreement the circumstances and the types of expenses unique to oil removal efforts for which Coast Guard would be reimbursed from the revolving fund which the proposed bills provide. Stockpiling of materials and equipment at key locations may be advisable.

For many years the Coast Guard has participated for the United States in the Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization which continues to deal with oil pollution and other maritime related problems of international concern.