

Mideast Markets

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Oil Cleanup

The Persian Gulf has suffered the "world's largest double whammy ever suffered by a region's environment," said oil cleanup expert Edward V. Badolato. The Gulf spill, estimated by the U.S. government to be forty times the size of Exxon Corp.'s Valdez spill, will require a massive cleanup effort. At the same time, fires from oil facilities in Kuwait are spewing forth harmful chemicals that are falling as far away as Turkey and Iran.

Gulf Gets 'Double Whammy'

The Persian Gulf has suffered the "world's largest double whammy ever suffered by a region's environment," said Edward V. Badolato, president of **Coatingency Management Services Inc.** Badolato spoke March 7 at a conference held in Washington that was sponsored by the Arab-American Business and Professional Association.

Badolato's company is participating in a bid by Raytheon Co. to oversee the Gulf oil cleanup. Raytheon is competing with BDM International Inc. and The Carlyle Group, Badolato said. He added that Bechtel Group Inc. is managing the initial response to the spill because the Saudi government wanted one source to coordinate the emergency effort. Which company will manage the long-term cleanup has yet to be determined.

The Persian Gulf spill is forty times the size of Exxon Corp.'s Valdez spill, making it the largest in history, according to the most recent estimates by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Saudi officials, however, have revised their estimates of the spill's size to several million barrels of oil down from 11 million. The largest oil spill ever recorded previously was the 4.2 million barrels that poured into the Gulf of Mexico 11 years ago when an offshore oil well blew.

So far, "wind, wave and luck have kept the oil spill from doing tremendous damage," Badolato said. "This could change." He cautioned that carcinogenic chemicals in oil could get into desalination plants in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Kuwait is experiencing the most extensive burning of oil and facilities "that anyone has ever seen," he said. When oil burns, toxins in oil compounds go into the air and form a gas.

"Unburned particles can make you sick," Badolato observed. Oil fires spill sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide into the air, producing acid rain, which has been detected as far away as Turkey and Iran.

In response, the U.S. government has sent a team of six to seven oil pollution experts to look at the possible health risks posed to U.S. personnel in the region by the oil fires, according to a government official.

The team's conclusion about health safety could influence whether individual businesses decide to send people to the region.
