



**October 4, 2011**

**Montebello Assessment Unified Command News Release**

### **Coast Guard, California conduct final planning for S.S. Montebello operation**

SAN PEDRO, Calif. – The Coast Guard and state of California are finalizing the planning phase of an operation to determine if oil is present aboard the sunken ship S.S. Montebello, which sits 900 feet below the ocean surface approximately 6.5 miles off the coast of Cambria, Calif.

Operating under a Unified Command, the Coast Guard and California Department of Fish and Game’s Office of Spill Prevention and Response will manage and oversee the operations, which are schedule to begin around Oct. 10, 2011.

“Protecting the invaluable resources of California is highest priority for DFG,” said Capt. Chris Graff from California Department of Fish and Game’s Office of Spill Prevention and Response, the State On-Scene Coordinator. “We appreciate the Coast Guard and our civilian partners efforts in this crucial inspection of the Montebello.”

“We are going to deal with this threat before it deals with us. We are employing some of the most sophisticated oil spill assessment equipment in the world. The information we get from this operation will help us develop the best practical plan for defending the coast of California,” said Coast Guard Capt. Roger Laferriere, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator.

In late September, the Coast Guard awarded the contract for the operation to Global Diving & Salvage, Inc. That press release can be found at <http://www.losangeles.uscgnews.com/go/doc/834/1206515/> and <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/Admin/Montebello/index.aspx>

To investigate the presence of oil, Global Diving & Salvage will use a sophisticated grouping of tools attached to a remotely operated vehicle. The ROV will use a sophisticated neutron backscatter detection system to test for the presence of oil inside the cargo and fuel oil tanks. The ROV will also be equipped with a proprietary device specifically designed to penetrate into one of the tanks and recover a 100ml sample of the vessels cargo. The very specialized drilling tool will penetrate the tank, recover the sample and seal the 1 inch diameter hole on retraction.

As an extra layer of safety the ROV will be able to, if necessary, place a strong magnetic patch over the sealed hole to further prevent oil from escaping.

At the outset, a short period of time will be required to calibrate the Dynamic Positioning System of the support vessel and the advanced subsea navigation equipment being used. In addition to the data collected during the tank analysis, the ROV will also collect sediment samples from the ocean floor and conduct a visual inspection of the pipelines running across the ship's main deck.

OSPR and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration technicians will independently conduct multiple tests of the samples and fingerprint the Montebello's oil.

To keep up to date on the latest S.S. Montebello news and information, visit OSPR's website at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/Admin/Montebello/index.aspx> or visit the Coast Guard in Los Angeles' website at <http://www.uscglosangeles.com> and select the "S.S. Montebello" menu tab.

OSPR will be releasing updates via Twitter (@CaliforniaDFG) and Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaDFG>).

A Joint Information Center will be stood up in Morro Bay during operations but in the interim media inquiries can be made by contacting Coast Guard Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Adam Eggers at (310) 521-4260 or Mr. Andrew Hughan with California DFG OSPR at (916) 322-8944.