

TESTIMONY OF LTC ROBERT RUCH
COMMANDER, PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
BEFORE THE
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
JANUARY 18, 2005

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Panel, I am LTC Robert Ruch, Commander of the Philadelphia District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the role played by the Corps of Engineers in response to the ATHOS I oil spill in the Delaware River on November 26, 2004.

On November 27, 2004, Captain Sarubbi, the U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port and Incident Commander for the ATHOS I spill event, requested that the Philadelphia District survey the Mantua Creek Anchorage. The Philadelphia District survey team began this work on November 28, 2004, using multibeam surveying technology to look for possible obstructions that could have caused the incident. Initial surveys (conducted from November 28 – 30) did not identify any obstructions. On December 1, 2004, the Corps supplemented the multibeam technology with contractor-provided side scan sonar in a further attempt to identify obstructions, focusing its efforts along the path taken by the ATHOS I as it approached the Citgo dock. On December 2, 2004, the Corps began to work in association with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) surveying team also assigned to assist in the event. Data developed by the Corps and NOAA were provided daily to the Coast Guard investigation team. This information, combined with similar data provided by the surveying and dive team hired by the ship owner, led to the identification of the suspected object in the Mantua Creek Anchorage.

Due to concerns raised by the shipping industry, Captain Sarubbi requested that the Corps perform in-depth surveys of the Delaware River shipping channel from the Commodore Barry Bridge upstream to the incident site, a distance of approximately 7 miles, to assure that the channel was free of any further obstructions. The Corps and the NOAA team worked together on this effort from December 4, 2004, through the

afternoon of December 7, 2004. The channel was determined to be clear of obstructions and was opened without restrictions on December 7, 2004.

The Corps continues to work with the Coast Guard investigation team in the identification of the obstruction found in the anchorage and other related issues, as further discussed by the Coast Guard. I commend Captain Sarubbi and the entire team on their efforts following the incident. The excellent cooperation of all parties involved including the Federal and State Agencies and the representatives of the ship owner are attributed to Captain Sarubbi's outstanding leadership.

I would also like to commend the efforts of the NOAA Navigation Response Team led by Mr. Howard Danley and Lt. Commander Rick Fletcher. Their survey expertise and dedication throughout the investigation greatly assisted the Corps in its mission and proved to be an invaluable partnership.

This concludes my testimony. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.