

# Scottish experts assess platform gas leak impact

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French energy giant Total's Elgin rig, 150 miles (240 kms) off Aberdeen in the North Sea. The Scottish government is sending a marine research vessel to carry out sampling around a North Sea oil platform that is spewing a cloud of potentially explosive gas.

The Scottish government was sending a marine research vessel Friday to carry out sampling around a North Sea oil platform that is spewing a cloud of potentially explosive gas.

Experts from Marine Scotland, the body which manages the country's waters, were to assess and monitor the impact of the leak from the Elgin platform.

The platform, operated by French energy giant Total, was evacuated of its 238 crew on March 25 when the leak was detected.

"Marine Scotland are sending a marine research vessel out to do some sampling around the Elgin. It will carry out the collection and analysis of environmental samples," a Scottish government spokeswoman told AFP.

Marine [Research Vessel](#) Alba na Mara is due to leave from the port of Fraserburgh on the Scottish east coast.

"The environmental risk continues to be assessed as minimal at this stage," Scottish environment secretary Richard Lochhead said Thursday.

"However, the Scottish government remains vigilant and we are carefully monitoring the situation and any developments.

"I continue to be kept fully updated and we are in regular contact with both Total and the UK government."

An estimated 200,000 cubic metres of highly [flammable gas](#) are escaping from the platform each day in a leak which Total says is costing the company \$2.5 million (1.91 million euros) daily.

A team of experts spent four hours inspecting a wellhead at the platform, Total said Thursday. It was the first time the wellhead had been inspected since the evacuation.

Total said a helicopter carrying the eight-strong team of experts flew the 150 miles (240 kilometres) to the rig from Aberdeen on the east coast of Scotland.

In a "key milestone" towards bringing the situation under control, the team established which zones of the platform were safe to access and what equipment will be required in any well control operation.

The [platform](#) is surrounded by a cloud of low-lying gas and Andrew

Hogg, Total's UK communications manager, has acknowledged there was a continuing risk of explosion.

Total is due to begin a two-pronged operation to block the well by pumping it full of "heavy mud" at high pressure and drilling two relief wells.

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