

Peru government says oil spill twice as big as previously thought

January 29 2022, by Francisco Jara



Peruvian soldiers help clean up one of around 20 beaches affected by the oil spill blamed on Spanish energy giant Repsol.

The oil spill off the coast of Peru sparked by a volcanic eruption thousands of miles away is twice as big as previously reported, the

government said Friday.

The announcement came hours after a court banned four directors from the Spanish oil company Repsol, which owns the refinery where the accident took place, from leaving the country for 18 months.

Environment Minister Ruben Ramirez told reporters the country has "a figure so far of 11,900 barrels" dumped into the sea on January 15, instead of the 6,000 reported earlier.

Repsol confirmed that the figure was higher, but gave a slightly lower estimate than the minister.

The spill, described as an "ecological disaster" by the Peruvian government, happened when an Italian-flagged tanker, the Mare Doricum, was unloading oil at the La Pampilla refinery, just off Peru's coast around 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Lima.

Repsol said the tanker was hit by freak waves triggered by a tsunami after a massive [volcanic eruption](#) near Tonga, more than 10,000 kilometers away.

The oil slick has been dragged by ocean currents about 140 kilometers north of the refinery, prosecutors said, causing the death of an undetermined number of fish and seabirds.

In addition, it left hundreds of local fishermen unable to take their boats out. They have staged protests against the Spanish company.



Crude oil washes ashore on Peru's Chacra y Mar beach on January 27, 2022 from a spill that occurred at a nearby refinery following a volcano in Tonga.

Deputy Environment Minister Alfredo Mamani said that 4,225 barrels of oil had been recovered from the sea and some 20 beaches, just over a third of the total.

For its part, Repsol said in a statement in Lima that "the amount of oil spilled is 10,396 barrels and 35 percent of that has already been recovered."

Earlier Friday, Judge Romualdo Aguedo granted the prosecution's request to prevent the four executives, including Repsol Peru's Spanish president Jaime Fernandez-Cuesta Luca de Tena, from leaving the

country, as investigators look into the catastrophic oil spill.

Peru has demanded compensation from Repsol, and the energy giant faces a potential \$34.5 million fine, the Environment Ministry has said.

The Mare Doricum is anchored with a ban on setting sail.

Fernandez-Cuesta Luca de Tena is accused of being responsible for the crime of "[environmental pollution](#) to the detriment of the state," with the three other executives considered "accomplices."

If found guilty, Repsol's president faces a potential prison sentence of four to six years.

In Madrid, the oil company pledged to "fully cooperate with any [criminal investigation](#), as we are already doing with the ongoing preliminary investigation," Repsol said in an email to AFP.

"Our main concern is cleaning up the environment. Repsol is putting all its efforts into cleaning up as quickly as possible," the company added.

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Citation: Peru government says oil spill twice as big as previously thought (2022, January 29)
retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-01-peru-oil-big-previously-thought.html>

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