

UK watchdog 'rapped Transocean'

APACHE has taken a crucial step forward on its \$1.2 billion Julimar-Brunello gas development off Western Australia by awarding the main front-end engineering and design contract to Wood Group subsidiary JP Kenny.

THE Obama Administration in the US has not minced words regarding who is at fault for the massive oil spill now washing up on the central US Gulf coast and who will pay for the clean-up and any possible damages to the regional ecology, businesses, and individuals affected.

The decision by the Bangladesh government to move forward with its fourth licensing round later this year marks a change of thinking in Dhaka that has fuelled hopes among potential foreign investors of a real shift in the country's upstream playing field.

HEEREMA Marine Contractors of the Netherlands has returned to the market for a newbuild heavy-lift pipelaying vessel, having previously ditched a high-profile plan for a larger, billion-dollar newbuild.

Petrobras has confirmed that it has postponed bidding dates in a giant tender for up to 28 deep-water rigs, a significant number of which will be owned by the Brazilian state oil company.

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The UK's Health & Safety Executive (HSE) issued drilling giant Transocean with improvement notices in 2005 and 2006, criticising operations related to the testing of blowout preventers (BOPs) on two of the company's units operating off the UK at the time, it emerged today.

Upstream staff

The news comes as Transocean and UK supermajor BP battle a blowout which occurred while one of the drilling giant's semi-submersibles was drilling on the BP-operated Mississippi Canyon Block 252, in the Gulf of Mexico.

There is no connection between the HSE improvement notices and the Deepwater Horizon incident.

In a notice issued in June 2006, the HSE said: "The multi-purpose tool used in blow-out preventer pressure testing was not so constructed as to be suitable for the purpose for which it was provided: and failed in service, exposing persons to risks that endangered their safety."

The notice was issued in relation to the semi-submersible rig Sedco 702.

A year earlier, the HSE issued an improvement notice criticising the condition of the equipment used to operate the BOP on the semi-submersible drilling rig Transocean Rather.

The 2005 warning said Transocean had failed to ensure that a remote BOP control panel had been properly maintained.

Transocean's Guy Cantwell said: "The incidents in question were addressed at the time."

It has since emerged that the subsea BOP in use at Macondo, in Mississippi Block 252, failed to activate. Six remotely-operated vehicles are working at the blowout site attempting to activate the unit.

BP's chief executive Tony Hayward has publicly claimed Transocean is responsible for the blowout, a claim Transocean strenuously denies.

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