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Folder Title:
OVP [Office of the Vice President] - Danube Oil Blockade - Actions for Birds

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
S	61	6	2	2



THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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OVP

Fax for the attention of Mrs. Katie McGinnity

11 February, 1993

Dear Mrs McGinnity

Environmental risks attached to Danube Oil Blockade

I wish to draw your attention to an aspect of the UN sanctions against Serbia which may have been overlooked. As you may know, there have been several confrontations between Romanian or Bulgarian authorities and Serbian tugboat Captains over blockade-running on the Danube.

Serbian tugs, towing barges with of thousands of tons of oil, have managed to escape being detained by threatening to discharge their cargos into the Danube.

If such a thing were to happen, or if an oil spill were to occur as a result of armed confrontation, this would be an environmental catastrophe. At the mouth of the Danube is Europe's - and one of the world's - most important wetland. The Danube Delta is home to hundreds of thousands of waterfowl, including seven species officially classified (by IUCN) as globally threatened with extinction. In addition, the delta supports thousands of families exploiting traditional fisheries and other wetland resources.

The UN, the USA and the European Community are increasing pressure on Romania and Bulgaria to use military force to secure the blockade.

To avert an environmental disaster, we must urge the US administration to ensure that before the blockade is more rigorously enforced, adequate measures are in place to cope with any resultant oil emergency.

This must include, as minimum, a contingency plan being agreed with all concerned to entail:

- * having strategically placed stocks of anti-pollution equipment and material, located within easy reach of the scene;
- * all necessary agreements with and between Romania and Bulgaria as to how the equipment is to be used;
- * mobilising expert assistance on clean-up and prevention;
- * making all necessary funds available.

*Action for
Birds*

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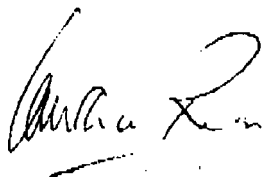
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Furthermore, efforts should be concentrated on preventing the shipments at source (eg the Ukraine). If force is unavoidable, this should be used before ships enter the Danube river system.

We are in touch with the Advisory Committee on Oil Pollution at Sea and the European Commission over this issue. If you have any queries please contact me or my colleague Kevin Strandring.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurence Rose', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Laurence Rose
Senior International Officer