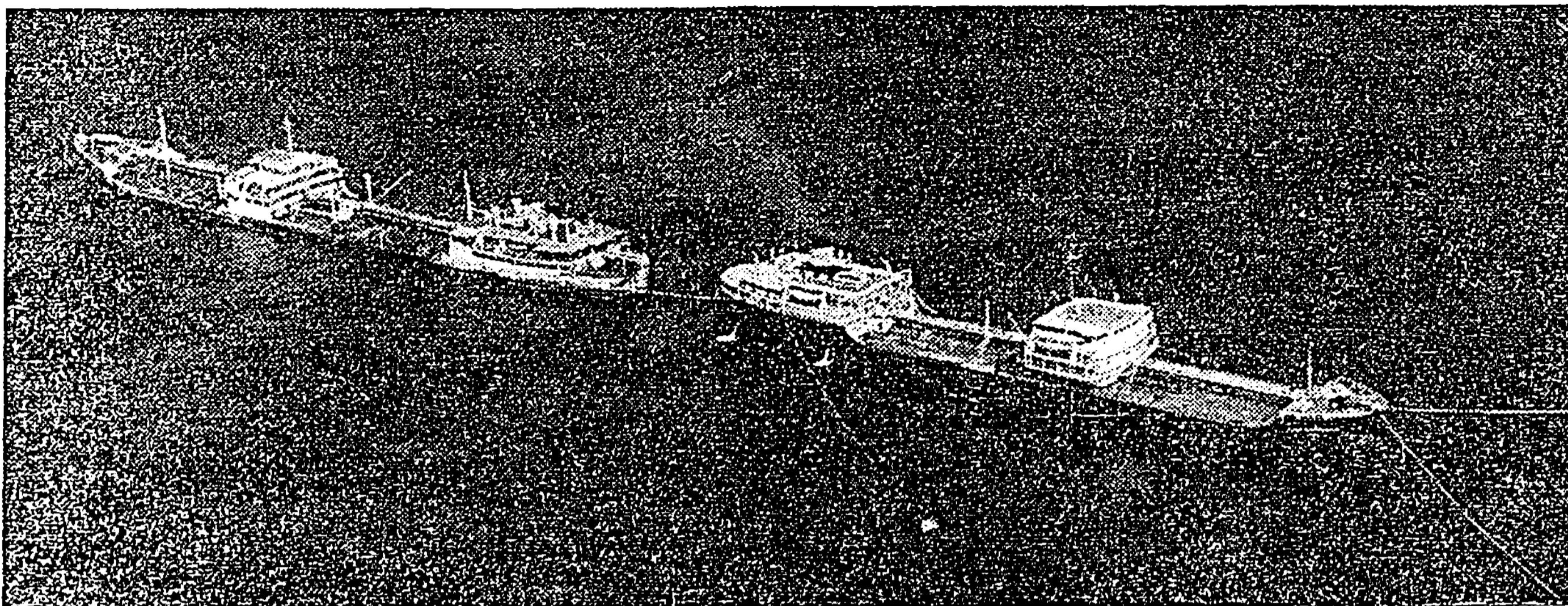


Refloating of Grounded Greek Tanker to Be Attempted This Week



The Esso Margarita, right, stern-to-stern with the stricken General Colocotronis as she removed cargo from the ship.

Attempts to refloat the stranded Greek tanker General Colocotronis, aground off the tourist beaches of Eleuthera Island in the Bahamas since March 7, are scheduled to get under way this week.

According to a spokesman for Murphy Pacific Marine Salvage Company here, the salvage vessel Rescue is to try to refloat the 555-foot tanker after pumps and compressed air have been employed to lighten the 18,178-ton ship.

Salvage attempts were preceded by several weeks of removing a 17,000-ton cargo of light Venezuelan crude oil from the tanker. The operation was begun under the authority of the Bahamas Gov-

ernment in cooperation with the owners and charterers and their insurance companies.

The cargo removal effort, which was nearing completion last week, consisted of a three-pronged effort designed to safeguard beaches from pollution, determine the causes of the ship's grounding and accomplish the eventual disposal of the cargo and removal of the ship from the reef.

The two principal salvage vessels were the 10,905-ton tanker Esso Margarita and the Rescue.

Last week after the cargo tanks of the Esso Margarita were full, the vessel raised anchor and moved out to sea to rendezvous with the passing 49,810-ton tanker Esso

Peru for an at-sea transfer of part of the salvaged cargo.

The Esso Margarita then returned to the scene of the wreck and maneuvered again into a stern-to-stern position to complete "lightering off" of the remaining 30,000 barrels of crude oil.

Cargo removal required the use of special heating coils to keep the crude oil flowing freely from the wrecked tanker to the Esso Margarita at a temperature of 108 degrees Fahrenheit. It was explained that the crude oil had a tendency to become gummy and sticky and hence unfit for pumping at 72 degrees.

An on-the-spot survey of the wreck showed that the only oil pollution affecting local beaches was produced

by a limited amount of oil that escaped from the ship's tanks after she had ripped some of her bottom open on the reef.

That quantity of oil, it was reported last week by the Bahamas News Bureau, was safely contained within an inner reef running some five or six miles offshore.

It is expected that this oil spill will be successfully disposed of by a combination of natural factors and the use of a new water-based, non-toxic dispersant.

Natural factors helpful in the disposal are absorption by sand and reef and action by animal parasites.

The General Colocotronis ran aground while on a voyage to a United States East Coast port.