

South Korea declares oil spill 'special'

by UPI

SEOUL -- The largest maritime oil spill in South Korea's history was declared a "special disaster" Tuesday as President Roh Moo-hyun toured the blackened coast. The designation clears the way for federal funds to go directly to six coastal regions where as many as 19,000 soldiers, police officers and civilians were working Tuesday to clean the shores, the Korea Times reported. Some 10,500 tons of crude oil leaked into the Yellow Sea off Taean in central South Korea after a crane barge rammed into a 146,000-ton Hong Kong tanker last Friday. Roh's spokesman Cheon Ho-seon said the government is considering asking for cleanup help from other countries after accepting an offer from the United States on Monday. Oil has spread more than 35 miles to the south and 13 miles to the north of the scene of the spill and maritime police told the Times 25 miles of coastline beaches were contaminated.

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