June 6, 2005

IODP EXPEDITION 308:
GULF OF MEXICO HYDROGEOLOGY
WEEK 1 REPORT

OPERATIONS

The transit to the United States from Ponta Delgada was concluded when the first line was secured to Pier North A3 in Mobile, Alabama at 1555 hr on 30 May 2005. The 3543 nm voyage from the Azores was accomplished at an average speed of 10.6 knots.

The IODP technical and the Transocean crew changes occurred on schedule on 31 May and 1 June respectively. In addition to the normal port call routine of loading and unloading freight, offloading cores, a USCG inspection, Transocean company compliance audit, vessel tours, and the bunkering of fuel (~1300 MT), there were a few non-standard items related to the special needs of Expedition 308. In anticipation of extremely heavy mud usage during the upcoming expedition, over 1000 short tons of bulk material was loaded during the first four days of the port call. Additionally, two service personnel joined the vessel to address specific high profile aspects of the Gulf of Mexico enterprise. One was a Measurement While Drilling specialist (Hwa Fong "Kelvin" Hoong) from Schlumberger and the other was a Mud Engineer, George Stokes, from Milchem International.

The last line was released from the dock at 1455 hr on 4 June when the vessel departed for the first site of Expedition 308. As of 1800 hr on 5 June, the vessel has traveled 234 nmi at an average speed of 10.0 knots. The speed was initially reduced by current, but now we are sailing at 11.2 knots and expect to be at BT4-4A by 1400 hr on 6 June.

SCIENCE SUMMARY

The science party boarded the ship on 1 June with the exception of one scientist who joined the ship on 3 June. The long portcall in Mobile was used by the science party for several important meetings, such as a review of the science plan for the whole expedition and a more specific overview of the contingency and operation plan at Site U1319. Scientists made all necessary preparations for their labs and started discussing and writing the various methods to be applied during the expeditions.

We spent significant time preparing the two T2P (temperature and two pressure) probes for deployment. Final calibration of the transducers was completed, the tools were assembled, and the deployment protocol was communicated to Transocean and IODP personnel.

Since we will need numerous whole round samples during Expedition 308, a particular focus of this week has been to work on a realistic sampling plan before arriving at the first site. As of Sunday, June 5th, the science party is ready for the first cores on deck.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT ACTIVITES

The Expedition 308 technical staff boarded the vessel on 31 May. Crossover and training with the off coming crew was begun. Four trucks of surface freight were loaded. All off going freight and cores where sent to College Station. From College Station any freight that needs to will be forwarded on. Tours of the vessel were conducted.

On 4 June an introduction meeting was held with the science crew. All trash was collected and offloaded before departure. Equipment and laboratory spaces were secured for sea. The vessel sailed on the afternoon of 4 June. ETA at the first site is 1400 hrs on 6 June.

During the short 1.8 day transit to the first site the technical crew prepared the shipboard laboratories for the commencement of coring. The scientific staff was introduced to the labs and technical staff. A pre-site meeting was held and the marine mammal policy gone over to prepare for the upcoming VSP logging. The VSP gun was rigged up.

The vessel continues to operate under a MARSEC Security Level I (lowest).