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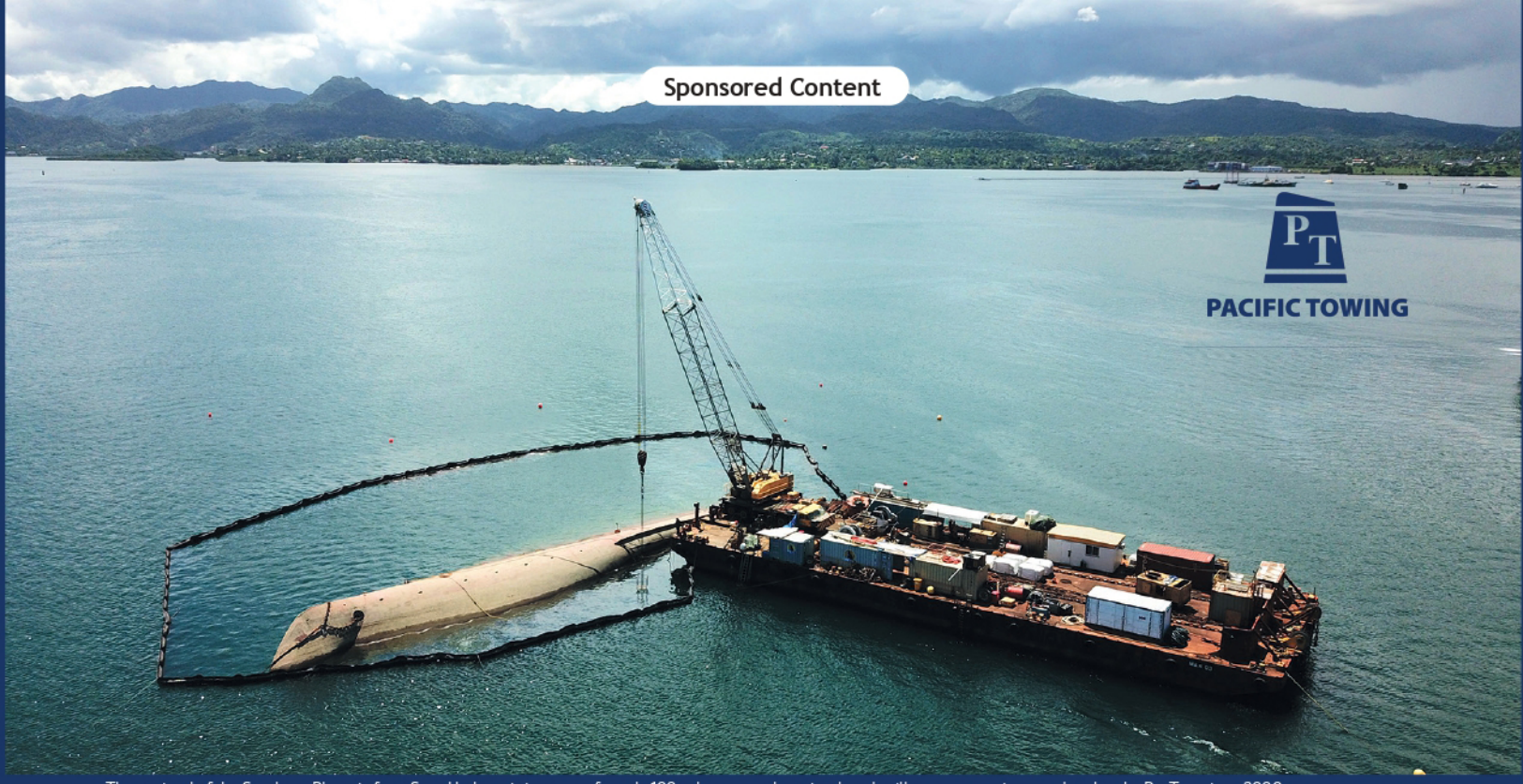

The retrieval of the Southern Phoenix from Suva Harbour is just one of nearly 100 salvage, wreck retrieval, and spill response projects undertaken by PacTow since 2000.

Melanesian Wreck Retrieval Solution for Fiji

Papua New Guinean marine services business, Pacific Towing (PacTow), is readying itself for more projects in Fiji and broader Melanesia. Already well known for its salvage of sunken cargo vessel, Southern Phoenix, from Fiji's Suva Harbour in 2019, PacTow is investigating other wreck retrieval projects in the area.

Although PacTow's core business is marine towage, the company has performed nearly 100 salvages, wreck retrievals, and spill response projects over the last 25 years. Maritime veteran and Manager of Pacific Towing, Gerard Kasnari, reports that in July this year alone, the company engaged in the salvage of three international fishing vessels and a cargo ship.

Kasnari reports that there are approximately 30 wrecks in Suva Harbour and many more scattered around Fiji's coastline. Solomon Islands, where PacTow has operated on a permanent basis for more than a decade, has a much larger proliferation of wrecks (including airplanes), primarily arising from the second world war. Many of these wrecks have been described as 'ticking ecological time bombs' due to the estimated tens of thousands of tonnes of oil contained in their bunkers.

"As wrecks age and their bunker tanks corrode, fuel escapes and pollutes the environment," explains Kasnari. Marine pollution is a severe problem for any country, but especially so for island nations such as Fiji and Solomon Islands, given the economic significance of their fishing and tourism industries. "The extent to which coastal communities also rely on healthy marine environments to literally 'put food on the table', as well as the ways which we as Melanesian people are connected spiritually and culturally with the ocean must also be taken into account when considering the impact of marine pollution arising from the wrecks that surround us," adds Kasnari.

Frances Tuimabualau, PacTow's recently appointed agent in Fiji, believes that the PNG company is the ideal candidate for Fiji to partner with to provide a Melanesian solution to the wrecks littering Fiji's coastlines and polluting its waters. "Not only does PacTow have considerable salvage experience and expertise, its own 20-vessel fleet, and 200+ Melanesian workforce (including a commercial dive team), it is also Melanesia's only full member of the International Salvage Union (ISU) and the International Spill Control Organization (ISCO)."

Tuimabualau also points to PacTow's history of training its seafarers, divers, and technicians. "The company's training investment is considerable. Staff are trained all over the world and it has two cadetship programmes. PacTow's ability and desire to build salvage and wreck retrieval capacity in Fiji is definitely extremely attractive when you consider the number of wrecks out there, our Nation's reliance on shipping, as well as the significance of our fishing and tourism industries."

Frances Tuimabualau is assisting marine services market leader, Pacific Towing, pursue wreck retrieval projects in Fiji.

PacTow delivers excellent, reliable, and safe marine services through Melanesia and the broader region. A well-maintained fleet, as well as a dedicated and exceptionally trained team underpin the company's ongoing expansion and success. PacTow is part of a larger sea and land logistics group wholly owned by Steamships Limited.

To learn more about PacTow: www.pacifictowingmarineservices.com