CLAIMS

1. A method for drilling a plurality of subsea wells from a substantially stationary floating vessel comprising:

connecting a drilling riser equipped with a drilling riser tensioner at a first end thereof to a first wellhead at a second, subsea end thereof using one or more guidelines attached to the drilling riser;

moving a guideline to a second subsea well location;

disconnecting the drilling riser from the first wellhead;

lifting the drilling riser together with its tensioner by an amount sufficient to clear the first wellhead while maintaining the second end of the drilling riser in the vicinity of the seafloor;

selectively tensioning the guideline while moving the first end of the drilling riser in a substantially horizontal direction such that the first end of the riser is more nearly vertically aligned with the second wellhead;

applying selected tension to the guideline sufficient to align the second end of the drilling riser with the second wellhead; and

lowering the drilling riser together with its tensioner sufficiently to engage the second wellhead.

~~2.~~ An offshore vessel comprising:

a deck support structure;

a deck supported by the deck support structure and having an upper surface and an undersurface;

a through opening in the deck from the upper surface to the undersurface;

a transporter adapted for translational movement within the opening;

an adapter frame within the transporter moveable from a first position wherein a load on the adapter frame is borne by the transporter to a second position wherein a load on the adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure and not by the transporter.

~~3.~~ An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~2~~ wherein

the vessel is a semi-submersible vessel.

~~4.~~ An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~2~~ wherein

the vessel is a tension leg platform (TLP).

~~5.~~ An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~2~~ further

comprising a drilling riser having a first end and an opposing second end supported by the adapter frame.

~~6.~~ An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~5~~ further

comprising a drilling riser tensioner attached to the drilling riser and the adapter frame.

7. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 6 further

comprising a blowout preventer connected to the second end of the drilling riser.

8. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 2 further

comprising rollers on the transporter.

9. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 8 wherein

the rollers are recirculating roller mechanisms in the nature of dollies and wheeled platforms.

10. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 8 further

comprising a pair of tracks on opposing sides of the opening in the deck sized and spaced to engage the rollers on the transporter.

11. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 2 further

comprising a rack on the deck proximate the opening and a motor-driven pinion on the transporter sized and spaced to engage the rack.

12. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 2 further

comprising hydraulic cylinders on the transporter operable to move the adapter frame from the first position to the second position.

13. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 2 further

comprising projecting load extensions on the adapter frame sized and spaced to engage the deck support structure when the adapter frame is in the second position.

14. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 13 further

comprising support brackets connected to the deck support structure and

projecting into the opening such that the load extensions on the adapter frame rest on the support brackets when the adapter frame is in the second position.

~~15.~~ An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~2~~ wherein

the first position wherein a load on the adapter frame is borne by the transporter is elevated relative to the second position wherein a load on the adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure and not by the transporter.

~~16~~. An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~12~~ further

comprising projecting lift extensions on the adapter frame sized and spaced to engage the hydraulic cylinders.

~~17~~. An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~2~~ further

comprising:

a pair of openings in the adapter frame;

at least two guide lines each passing through one of the openings in the adapter frame;

at least two winches each connected to the deck support structure and engaged with a guide line; and,

a pair of sheaves mounted on a drilling riser tensioner supported by the adapter frame and in contact with the guide lines.

~~18.~~ An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~17~~

wherein the guide lines are connected to a drilling riser supported by the adapter frame.

~~19.~~ An offshore vessel as recited in claim ~~6~~ further comprising a central opening in the adapter frame with a peripheral, inwardly-projecting ledge supporting the drilling riser tensioner.

~~20.~~ A drilling riser transport system comprising:

a support structure;

a transport trolley adapted for translational movement on the support structure; and,

an adapter frame attached to the transport trolley and moveable from a first position wherein a drilling riser connected to the adapter frame is supported by the transport trolley to a second position wherein the drilling riser is supported by the support structure and not by the transport trolley.

~~21.~~ An offshore vessel comprising:

a deck support structure;

a deck supported by the deck support structure and having an upper surface and an undersurface;

a through opening in the deck from the upper surface to the undersurface having a plurality of discrete, contiguous segments;

a transporter adapted for translational movement between segments within the opening;

a first adapter frame located within the transporter and moveable from a first position wherein a load on the first adapter frame is borne by the transporter to a second position wherein a load on the first adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure and not by the transporter;

a drilling riser having a first end and an opposing second end supported by the first adapter frame;

a drilling riser tensioner attached to the drilling riser and the first adapter frame;

a removable, second adapter frame located in a segment not occupied by the transporter and configured such that a load on the second adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure;

a production riser having a first end and an opposing second end supported by the second adapter frame; and,

a production riser tensioner attached to the drilling riser and the second adapter frame.

1. An offshore vessel comprising:

a deck support structure;

a deck supported by the deck support structure and having an upper surface and an undersurface;

a through opening in the deck from the upper surface to the undersurface;

a transporter adapted for translational movement within the opening;

an adapter frame within the transporter moveable from a first position wherein a load on the adapter frame is borne by the transporter to a second position wherein a load on the adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure and not by the transporter.

2. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 wherein

the vessel is a semi-submersible vessel.

3. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 wherein

the vessel is a tension leg platform (TLP).

4. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 further

comprising a drilling riser having a first end and an opposing second end supported by the adapter frame.

5. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 4 further

comprising a drilling riser tensioner attached to the drilling riser and the adapter frame.

6. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 5 further

comprising a blowout preventer connected to the second end of the drilling riser.

7. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 further

comprising rollers on the transporter.

8. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 7 wherein

the rollers are recirculating roller mechanisms in the nature of dollies and wheeled platforms.

9. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 7 further

comprising a pair of tracks on opposing sides of the opening in the deck sized and spaced to engage the rollers on the transporter.

10. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 further

comprising a rack on the deck proximate the opening and a motor-driven pinion on the transporter sized and spaced to engage the rack.

11. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 further

comprising hydraulic cylinders on the transporter operable to move the adapter frame from the first position to the second position.

12. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 further

comprising projecting load extensions on the adapter frame sized and spaced to engage the deck support structure when the adapter frame is in the second position.

13. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 12 further

comprising support brackets connected to the deck support structure and

projecting into the opening such that the load extensions on the adapter frame rest on the support brackets when the adapter frame is in the second position.

14. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 wherein

the first position wherein a load on the adapter frame is borne by the transporter is elevated relative to the second position wherein a load on the adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure and not by the transporter.

15. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 11 further

comprising projecting lift extensions on the adapter frame sized and spaced to engage the hydraulic cylinders.

16. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 1 further

comprising:

a pair of openings in the adapter frame;

at least two guide lines each passing through one of the openings in the adapter frame;

at least two winches each connected to the deck support structure and engaged with a guide line; and,

a pair of sheaves mounted on a drilling riser tensioner supported by the adapter frame and in contact with the guide lines.

17. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 16

wherein the guide lines are connected to a drilling riser supported by the adapter frame.

18. An offshore vessel as recited in claim 5 further comprising a central opening in the adapter frame with a peripheral, inwardly-projecting ledge supporting the drilling riser tensioner.

19. A drilling riser transport system comprising:

a support structure;

a transport trolley adapted for translational movement on the support structure; and,

an adapter frame attached to the transport trolley and moveable from a first position wherein a drilling riser connected to the adapter frame is supported by the transport trolley to a second position wherein the drilling riser is supported by the support structure and not by the transport trolley.

20. An offshore vessel comprising:

a deck support structure;

a deck supported by the deck support structure and having an upper surface and an undersurface;

a through opening in the deck from the upper surface to the undersurface having a plurality of discrete, contiguous segments;

a transporter adapted for translational movement between segments within the opening;

a first adapter frame located within the transporter and moveable from a first position wherein a load on the first adapter frame is borne by the transporter to a second position wherein a load on the first adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure and not by the transporter;

a drilling riser having a first end and an opposing second end supported by the first adapter frame;

a drilling riser tensioner attached to the drilling riser and the first adapter frame;

a removable, second adapter frame located in a segment not occupied by the transporter and configured such that a load on the second adapter frame is substantially borne by the deck support structure;

a production riser having a first end and an opposing second end supported by the second adapter frame; and,

a production riser tensioner attached to the drilling riser and the second adapter frame.